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Crosslocations : looking for somewhere in particular across the Mediterranean

Green, Sarah

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A wide-angle photograph of a beach scene. In the foreground, a young boy is lying on his stomach on an orange inflatable ring, floating in the shallow water. In the middle ground, two other children are standing in the water, one holding a red bucket. The background shows a calm sea with several large ships and a small sailboat on the horizon under a clear, light blue sky.

CROSSLOCATIONS:

looking for somewhere in particular
across the Mediterranean

Crosslocations:

looking for somewhere in particular
across the *Mediterranean*

Lena Malm (photographer)

Ninnu Koskenalho (editor and anthropologist)

Sarah Green, Phaedra Douzina-Bakalaki, Samuli Lähteenaho,
Carl Rommel, Patricia Scalco and Laia Soto Bermant (anthropologists)



European Research Council

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Each photograph in this book tells its own story about the places where they were taken, all of which are somewhere around the Mediterranean. They capture some glimpses of the crosscurrents of life and the way buildings, landscapes, people, animals, things, and activities co-exist somewhere. Sometimes jumbled together randomly, sometimes planned carefully and occasionally full of visible and invisible borders that keep things apart.



Imaging Crosslocations

Sarah Green

The idea was to try and capture some moments of what we are calling *Crosslocations*: it is a project that explores the connections and disconnections between places in the Mediterranean region. Rather than look at each place on its own terms, we wanted to understand how its connections with, and separations from, other places, affect the place. For example, everyone sometimes feels that they live in a different world from other people around them, even though they share the same space.

Crosslocations tries to understand that: how different worlds can overlap in the same space and what that means in terms of being somewhere. It is a bit like thinking of places as a crisscrossing of many different paths, built by different people and organisations, which carry a diversity of travellers and things along their routes. The whole Mediterranean region has had a reputation for being a crossroads for centuries, so it was a good place for this work, but it is possible to think of any place in that way.

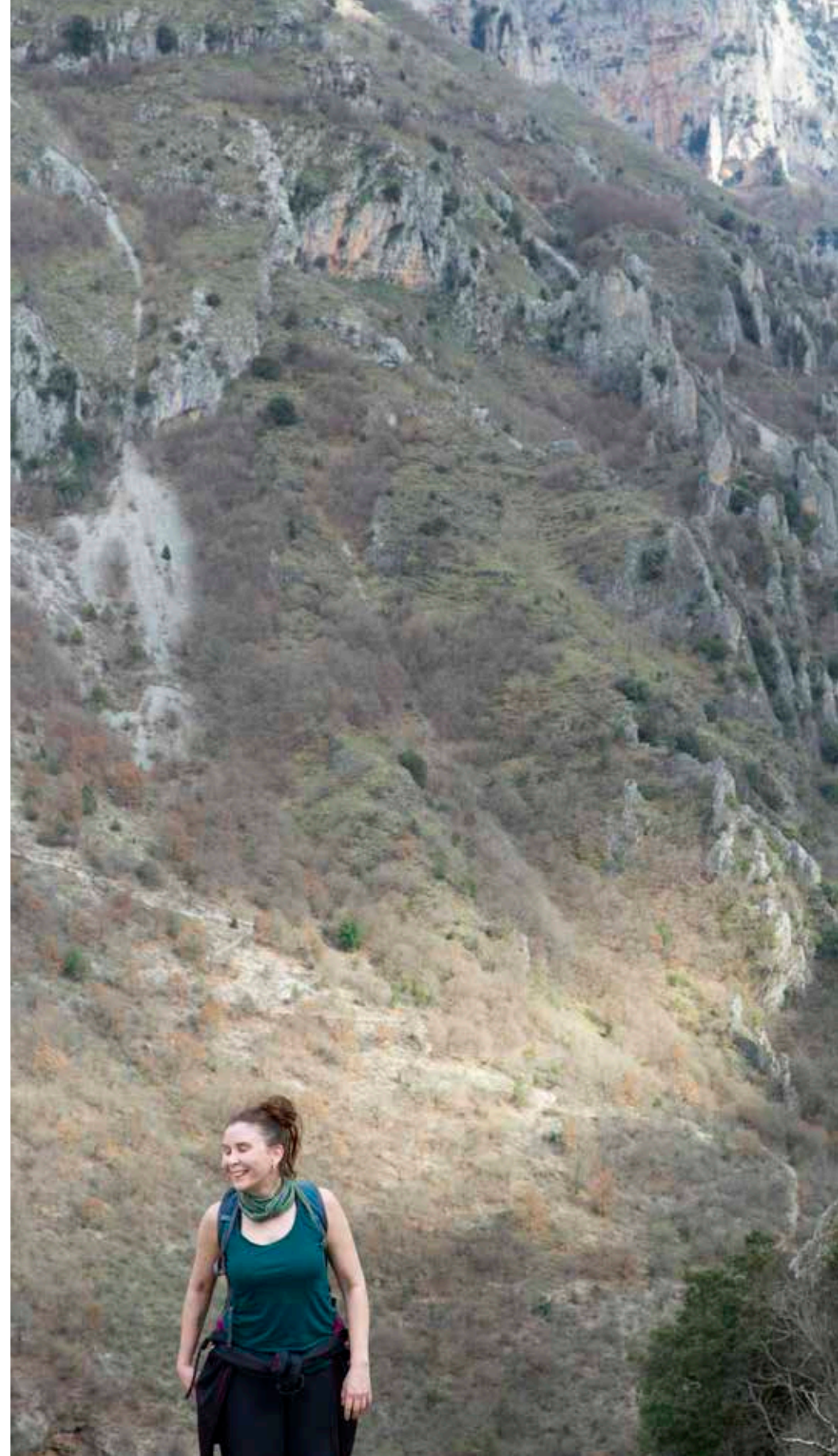


Those of us who took a few of these journeys along with the photographer for this book, Lena Malm, are mostly anthropologists, collaborating with a cartographer, Philippe Rekacewicz, who worked with us to map these crosslocations, and Ninnu Koskenalho, who helped organise everything. Philippe gave us a chance to visit Israel/Palestine, which he has studied for many years, where we had an opportunity to spend a short time with some Bedouin peoples and their animals. For the rest of us: Phaedra Douzina-Bakalaki worked in Greece; Samuli Lähteenaho worked in Lebanon; Carl Rommel worked in Egypt; Patricia Scalco worked in Turkey; Laia Soto Bermant worked in Melilla, a small Spanish territory located in north Africa that is next to Morocco; I travelled from place to place, trying to understand the different ways that people move with animals across the Mediterranean, and how international organisations try to prevent the spread of disease.



When I began that project, nobody had heard of Covid-19, which dramatically changed everything, but not before we were able to take these journeys, just before the world changed. Unfortunately, the pandemic prevented us from visiting two other places: central Spain, where Viljami Kankaanpää-Kukkonen worked, and Calabria, in southern Italy, where Joseph Viscomi worked. Although these places are not featured in this book, they also contributed towards an understanding of what the images show – the traces, glimpses, the briefest of shadows of what we were all looking for – even if their work isn't in pictures here.

The words you will find in this book, all of which have been expertly edited by Ninnu Koskenalho, are as cross-located as the places. We came to understand that it is not only diverse languages, architecture, clothing, and landscapes that co-exist in the same places; ways of doing, ways of thinking, and styles of expressing yourself also change. Some texts are conversations between the anthropologist and the photographer. These conversations are informal, non-academic discussions that try to capture something of the moment of taking the pictures and how each of them understood what was going on. Other texts are a little more formal, written by the anthropologist to say something of what they understood of the places in which they worked and the role that the photography played there. The differences between the styles of the texts are marked; each comes from a different world of description, one that draws out different aspects of what it means to encounter a place, an image, a moment when something happens.



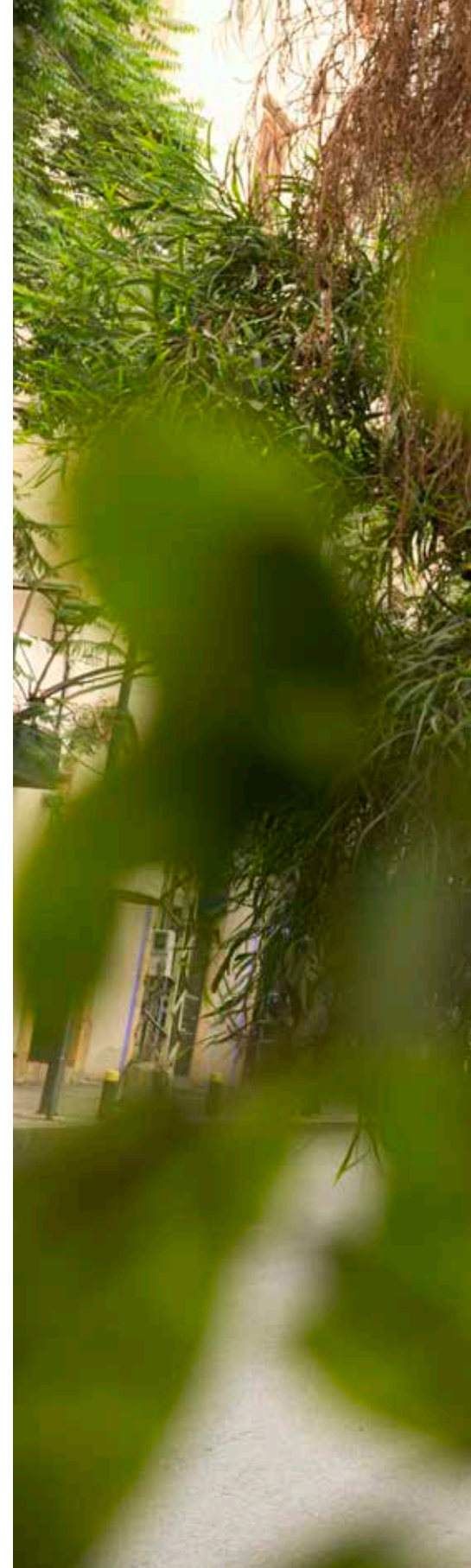


There are other crosslocations that the reader can take from this book. The pictures and the texts show a small part of what could be seen or known. Trying to work out what is happening in the photo means relating what you already know to what appears in the image and what can be read in the words. There are always things out of the frame and out of your mind, but what is there gives you enough to make something out of it.

In looking at the photographs, the colours, the lines, the shades, the points, and the angles are all important. So take a moment to look at any one of them a little bit longer, exploring what it reminds you of and thinking through what has to exist elsewhere for what is in that photo to exist. Think through how the place in the image is connected to and disconnected from many other places, and think about what might be beyond that frame.

In one picture, a Bedouin girl is standing somewhere in the West Bank, holding a bright yellow balloon quite tightly between her hands. She is wearing a sweatshirt with English writing on it and a cartoon drawing of an old-style car. She is standing outside an enclosure that contains a flock of sheep being tended to by a tall woman wearing a headscarf and with her back to the camera. Behind the girl are some hills that are almost entirely bare of vegetation. The girl may or may not speak or read English, the language on her shirt; perhaps it does not matter, or maybe it means everything. Almost all the colours in the photo are the tans, browns, and blacks of the desert; but the girl's shirt is a bright lime green, the kind of colour that can only be produced with chemical dyes, and her trousers, a pair of stretchy sweatpants, are turquoise. They are not from around here, those clothes, and they need a factory to produce the cloth. Maybe they come from Turkey, maybe from China, maybe somewhere else, or from a combination of places. Anyway, they are not from here, the place that the photograph shows.





Nobody looking at these photographs will see the same locations. That is, in the end, what crosslocations mean: the coexistence of different ways to know about being somewhere in particular and finding ways to glimpse these places at the moment they appear. Enjoy.







Imaginations of urban public space in Beirut

Samuli Lähteenaho

In Beirut, Lebanon, the urban coastline is changing. But who is it for? Is the seaside a place for public beaches and parks or fenced-off private property? While Beirut's public beaches are strained by pollution and lack of resources for maintenance, they remain open to all. Meanwhile, developers and politicians see the coastal and other urban spaces as valuable property for tourism or leisure industries. As a result, many city folks have taken to protest, to safeguard the remaining spaces as open and free of charge. Often this protest is coupled with concern for the environmental state of the coast and the waters just outside Beirut. As time moves on, some places are forever changed with new hotel projects or other developments. Others are re-enforced as public space in its multiple forms, such as the renovation of public gardens or cancellation of planned coastal construction projects.

What should a public place then look like? In urban planning and official imaginations, the spaces are often clean, well organised, and provided with sufficient infrastructural support. Such are many of the city's green spaces, with lush flowerbeds and strict rules forbidding behaviours such as picnics and waterpipe smoking. Yet many of the common spaces in the city and on the coastline remain in a complex position between public and private categories. They escape such bureaucratic imaginations. With differing sets of rules enforced or ignored, people use the beaches, parks, and coastal spots for daily leisure even with the possible dangers of only partial official control. In these spaces, different imaginations of urban space are at odds yet coexisting.



Lena:

Beirut was an accessible, vibrant, and welcoming location for a photographer. The only time anyone objected to me taking photos was at half-finished construction sites. Beirut seems to be full of construction sites, with ads for upcoming luxurious buildings. But, looking closer, you notice the ads have been hanging forgotten on construction fences for quite a while, against a backdrop of unused equipment and lonely, half-finished buildings.

Samuli:

Beirut has been a vast construction site since the end of the civil war: the political economy has relied on the industry for the last 30 years. The coastal areas used to be especially full of recent projects. The industry went into crisis once the Syrian civil war started, and many projects ran out of funding.

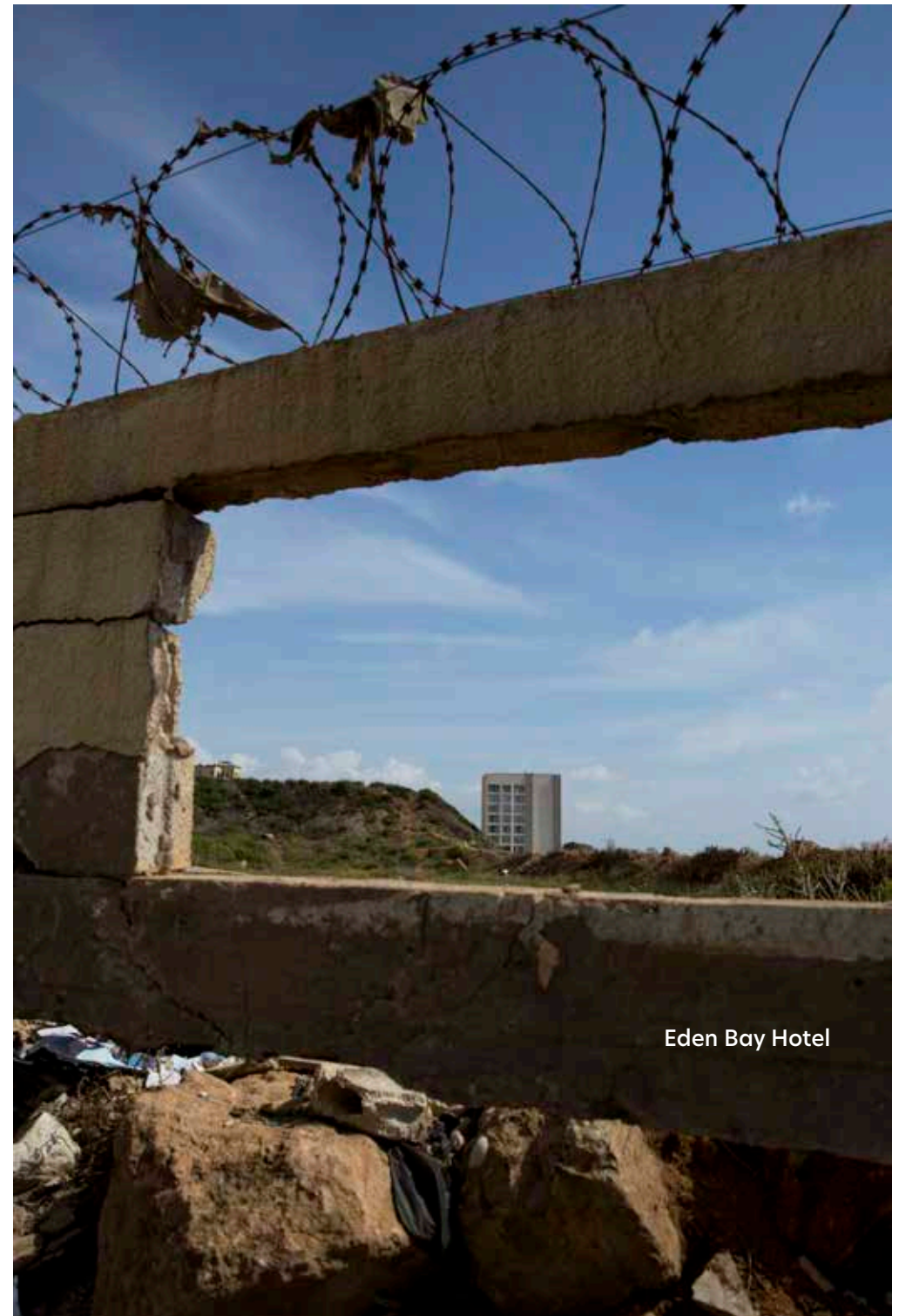
It's hard to say why a construction site was off-limits to photography. It's public knowledge, though, that these businesses can be shady in some ways in Beirut. The issues with the industry as a whole may create antagonism towards journalists and photographers. It's also a question of distance and detail. A close look at these vast buildings could be perceived as more threatening than featuring them as part of the overall city skyline.

Lena:

We walked by the controversial Eden Bay Hotel on the beach. As we approached it, someone ran out, yelling at us not to take photos.

Samuli:

The recently built Eden Bay Hotel was, from the start, very contested. It was a grey area of law: the hotel broke some building regulations while following others. It also evoked an important moral and political question – whether you should be able to build a hotel on a public beach in the first place. The case has been a focus for both activism and journalism, and there's tension related to issues of visibility around the hotel, despite widely circulating photos.











Lena:

I also visited one highly organised public park that was peppered with big signs, clearly marked footpaths, and even a police hut at the entrance. It was an interesting contrast to the sites you took me to; like the public beach with buildings made from scrap material.

Samuli:

The contrast between the different urban imaginations these sites materialise is nicely captured in the photos. The park you mention is a good example of this, with walls, police, regulations, and signs everywhere. Around 15 years ago, the park was set to be razed and replaced by a parking tower, but after a campaign to protect the park, it was renovated instead, under a public/private partnership. Now the park is funded by a big clothing retailer.

Lena:

I thought it was 200 years old! It has a classical city park vibe.

Samuli:

The park itself dates to the late Ottoman administration in Beirut but has gone through many phases in its history. In its current incarnation, the park is very much built on the idea of what an official public space should look like in a regulated and restricted way. It also somewhat follows the original Ottoman-era plan as a gesture of nostalgia. Some activists would say it's not public for the people at all due to all the restrictions. The beach and its scrap-metal buildings you referred to form a counterpoint to it. Both locations attracted very little official interest from the end of the civil war until the early 2000s. The beach was just an ill-maintained coastal strip with a bad reputation as a shady place for criminal activities.

Now the beach is maintained by an environmental NGO that runs it as a self-funded project. They built the infrastructure on sand from whatever scrap materials they could find, which is, of course, also a point of environmentalism. In terms of regulations, the park is tightly controlled, while the beach has rules but is much less restricted, with no set entry times and the like.



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Lena:

What about the other coastal location we went to? The rocky place was vibrant with so many people picnicking, fishing, diving from the cliffs ...

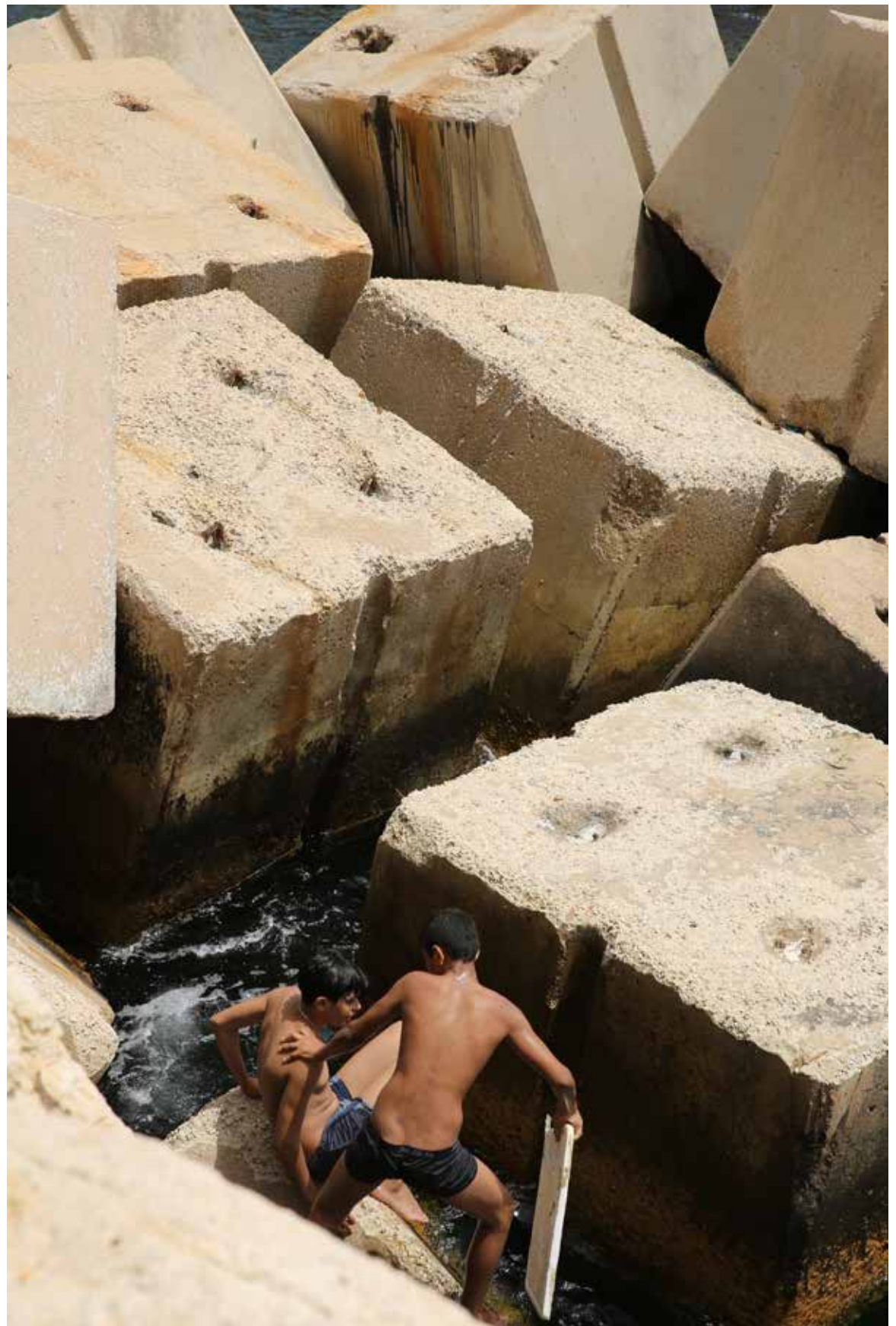
Samuli:

This rocky outcropping is not officially a public space but a privately owned coastline strip subject to zoning regulations that have hindered construction projects. The area had been in use as a public space and thus garnered the interest of both activists. Urban researchers, who have argued the way it's been used by the people, qualify it as inherently important to be maintained as free to access. A planned hotel project was put on hold after successful campaigning. The place continues to be an open, non-designated area with no official body responsible for it. It's a popular spot for spending time: lively and full of people. You can see in the photos how much fun people have there. It becomes an affective space of enjoyment.

Lena:

But we're not talking about all people. Upper-class people don't go here. We visited a somewhat expensive private club next to the rocky beach: a swimming pool and sunbeds. Maybe the rocky beach is for people not welcome in more sterile spaces.







Lena:

The first beach we talked about is not an ideal place to swim. There's sewage flowing into the sea there and even signs discouraging swimming.

Samuli:

Pollution of coastal waters is a significant issue. Beirut has no proper sewage treatment facilities. Research shows that swimming in the waters around Beirut is not as safe as one might imagine. This is highlighted on the public beach, where there are active sewage outlets. The segregation of coastal places according to class, wealth, gender, and national background is a significant part of the politics of the coastline.





Burj El Barajneh







A cross-located border: the Spanish enclave of Melilla

Laia Soto Bermant

Melilla is a fenced city enclave in northeastern Morocco that has been under Spanish sovereignty since 1497. Melilla is also one of the European Union's southernmost territories in Africa and a key entry point in trade and migration routes linking Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. It is, therefore, simultaneously a leftover from a previous territorial arrangement and a product of contemporary political and economic borders. Over the past years, Melilla has found itself at the centre of the so-called Mediterranean 'migrant crisis', with increasing numbers of migrants from the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa trying to enter the city to seek asylum in Europe.

Melilla is also an important trading hub in the region. Thousands of Moroccans access the Spanish territory on a daily basis to work as domestics, perform menial jobs, and smuggle goods out to sell them across the border. The enclave relies heavily on this informal but profitable frontier economy, and border regulations allow these workers daily entrance to the city. Tons of goods flow from Melilla on a daily basis, wrapped in big bundles that are carried on the backs of thousands of people. The borders here are multiple, even in physical terms, but also legally, symbolically, and even religiously, making Melilla into multiple locations all at once.



Lena:
Melilla seems very pretty, neat and clean, a bit unreal. There's a superficial quality – everything is organised and civilised with none of the grit and grime of a port town.

Laia:
It's interesting you say that. There's a lot of heavy political work put into this "appearing European", from the European and Spanish flags strategically placed throughout the city to the manicured urban landscape of the old medieval citadel, the port, or the golf course. But this carefully staged 'European' landscape is also punctuated by (or disrupted if you will) by 'intrusions' from the other side of the border: street children rummaging trash bins, cardboard boxes, and plastic wraps that are left behind after a long journey of smuggling, and other 'glitches' in the matrix that show that Melilla is not where it says it is.





super sport .es





Lena:

The most defining feature of Melilla must be the fence.

The city is surrounded by a triple security fence designed to deter potential migrants waiting in the neighbouring hills. The fence is equipped with infrared video cameras, as well as microphone cables and surveillance watch posts, and a military police helicopter patrols the skies of the city every night.

Laia:

The first fence was built in 1998 after Spain joined the EU, but it was shorter than and mostly symbolic, as not too many migrants entered the EU here. After 2001 and 9/11, patrolling on the Mediterranean increased. The established migrant route through Gibraltar was cut off, and groups of Sub-Saharan Africans turned to Melilla as a gate into the EU. In 2005 thousands of migrants arrived in just a few months' time. The Spanish government reacted by building a much higher fence (the one we see now) with high-tech security measures and increased border patrols.





Lena:
There are refugee centres in Melilla for the asylum seekers who cross the border. Who are the asylum seekers, where do they come from?



Laia:
It has changed over time. We usually see the typical image of Sub-Saharan Africans jumping over the fence, but there are also people from other parts of the world. During my first trip to Melilla in 2008/2009, for example, in Melilla's migrant centre (CETI), there were people from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India, who had travelled by plane to Algeria or Morocco and then paid to be smuggled over the border in a car or small truck. In 2013, there were also many people from Syria who had fled the war, and they usually entered Melilla 'legally' with fake passports. By 2017, the majority were Sub-Saharan Africans again. They are the ones who jump over the fence because they cannot pass as Moroccans, and they don't usually have the money to pay drivers to smuggle them in.

The jumpers first camp on a nearby mountain for a few weeks. These camps are usually organised by nationality – you go where your countrymen are. The campers lay waiting for the right time. I was told that someone from inside the centre (another migrant, not a worker) usually sends an SMS to let them know when to cross.



Laia:

As the fence is heavily patrolled, the people then organise a group jump. If a hundred people storm the fence together, at least some of them will make it over. They come down the side of the mountain together. Some throw up makeshift ladders. Others have attached hooks to their shoes for climbing the wall. Some cross over it. More don't.



Lena:

What happens for the ones that cross over? Does entering Melilla mean the asylum process starts automatically?

Laia:

What should happen is this: they are taken to the CETI, the centre for the 'temporary stay of migrants'. There, the process of applying for asylum begins. But, unfortunately, it takes a long time, and nothing can happen until a decision is made, so people get stuck here for years, even. They don't have to stay in the centres, though: as they can't leave Melilla, there's no reason to lock them in.

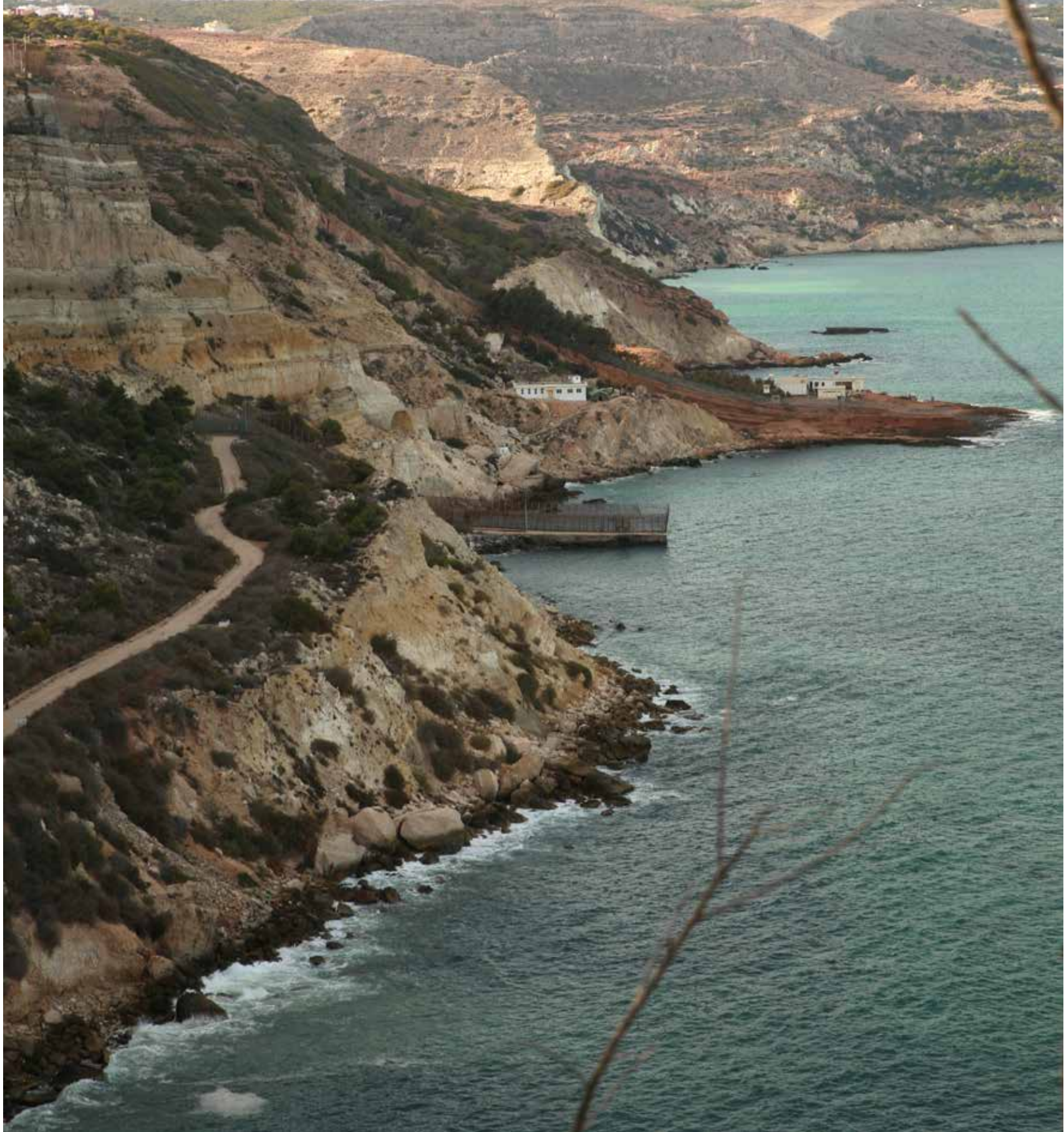
However, what often happens in practice is this: as soon as people cross over, the Civil Guard (the Spanish military police) expels them through the green gates. They open the gates and physically toss people back to Morocco. This has been deemed illegal by international lawyers, as these people have a right to begin the asylum process. Still, the Spanish government has found a legal loophole, claiming that while they are "on" the fence, they are not inside Spanish territory, and thus many people get sent back to the other side immediately. The ones who stay are eventually either deported or sent to mainland Spain to another centre; a lot of times, they disappear on the way.

Lena:

The sea lies between Spain and Melilla, but it is not their border, right?

Laia:

Morocco doesn't recognise Melilla as a Spanish territory, so it doesn't recognise the sea as such either. There is a stretch of water across Melilla that is patrolled by Spanish police. Locals can only fish in this small strip of water. The local fishing trade died when, after gaining independence from Spain, Morocco started claiming back the sea as well. Melillan fishermen were chased out by the Moroccan military and eventually gave up. Now fish is imported from mainland Spain by cargo ships and from Morocco by trucks.





Laia:

A lot of smuggling goes on at the land border. This is illegal from the Moroccan point of view but inconsequential or useful from the Spanish one. When goods enter Melilla, import tax is paid, and all is legal. When they are smuggled to Morocco, Spanish authorities turn away.

Lena:

In some photos, you can see some writing on the bundles. What does it say?

Laia:

These are important signs. Smuggling is very organised – there are businessmen on both sides taking care of importing the goods. The Moroccan buyer needs to hire couriers to smuggle the goods across. There are so many people doing this that you need a system telling everyone who a particular parcel belongs to. Bundles are marked with symbols that translate into tickets that translate into money.





Laia:

The “opening times” for smugglers to move their haul are decided by the Spanish police. Their window of action has been shrinking in recent years. Movements are possibly also timed to who is on guard on the other side: they need to be bribed, and maybe not all of them wish to be involved in what is an illegal trade on the Moroccan side.



Lena:

Melilla is photogenic, very visual, and interesting. There are so many pictures I didn't take because I couldn't access people or places. There's only so much you can do from a moving car! There was confusion about whether the couriers could be photographed or not. I was taking photos from a taxi – the driver circled the area twice but was visibly upset by that and said he didn't want to be seen. Why is this?





Laia:

Technically, it's illegal to take photos of the fence. Also, people who work as couriers generally don't like their pictures taken. I'm going to guess the driver was of Moroccan descent – so from the side of the smuggling trade that sees it as illegal – and likely felt uncomfortable, knowing people don't like being photographed. It's a small town; everyone knows everyone. Some outsiders, such as journalists, are given access. It's also a question of being able to explain yourself. If you can state you're photographing for a particular newspaper, people can place you and trust you – as opposed to someone who's just walking around and taking photos for no apparent reason.

Laiia:

There's a lot going on that you cannot see and cannot photograph.
There's money laundering, drug trade – things you know exist only
due to police raids, but you have no idea how and where it happens.
That's the kind of underground movement that is unseen in Melilla.







Animal prints and traces

Sarah Green

There are paths and routes leading from the Mediterranean to just about anywhere, and animals have used them as much as people over the centuries. In addition to livestock, there were wild animals: predators that went after the livestock moving with human travellers. The routes created a moving ecosystem of animal activity.

All of that reflected a particular relationship between people, animals, environments, and travel – one that is long gone now. Yet, there are still huge numbers of animals being moved into and out of the Mediterranean region; it's just in a different way, reflecting today's relations. There are specialised ships, trucks, and trains that carry intensively farmed animals in huge numbers across the planet. These animals are bred to grow faster,

bigger, and fatter than ever before, and most of them live indoors. The wolves have been left with less to eat, and wild boar are taking over many places the wolves once roamed, while many foxes have moved into cities. At the same time, the few people who still have camels and who travelled far and wide with them for a living, such as the Bedouin of Israel-Palestine and Jordan, now find themselves caught in a dense network of impassable borders, unable to roam across the desert as they once did.

Following the changes in how the animals have been moved across the Mediterranean region can tell a different story about how people have changed the way that the region is connected to, and separated from, the rest of the world.



Sarah:

Complex relations and separations exist between the animals and people in these photos. The animals are all domesticated: livestock or feral strays. They share the infrastructure of the people-made environment. Within it, they affect and are affected by one another, even if they live in parallel worlds sometimes.

When there's a conflict of interests between people and animals, the animals have to squeeze into the margins. Quite often, it's a question of whether the authorities care about the existence of the strays. If they do, strays are picked up and moved to special places. If not, they wander around in the gaps, ignored by the authorities.

This says a lot about borders and ways of understanding location: the border rules are made for particular purposes and kinds of living beings. When animals such as wild boars or rats move into densely human-occupied space, they disturb people, and there's usually a heavy price to pay. Many other animals, such as hedgehogs, are not seen as important and aren't really noticed. Some of the photos capture those dynamics: the unnoticed or tolerated things and beings living in the gaps. That provides a glimpse of how different worlds can co-exist in the same place.





Sarah:

In Epirus, northern Greece, certain animals belong in the landscape more than others. Goats have been domesticated and herded in that area for more than ten thousand years. The environment has been altered by goats. The local oak scrub has thorns, unlike any of its cousins in other parts of the world. The thorns have evolved in response to goats browsing the tops of fresh plants and causing damage.

We visited Epirus just before Covid-19 hit, and one of the things locals complained about were cows. According to the locals, cows are environmentally damaging: they cause a mess around the place, and when they use water sources, sheep won't drink from them, as they hate the smell of the cows. Locals also complained of unprofessional cowherds moving into Epirus: they consider it possible to be lazy and still keep cows, whereas goat-herding requires much more work and skill.

Lena:

In the pictures, there's a big herd of sheep being guided by dogs to the road. The dogs got distracted by my presence and came up to check on me and missed the sheep getting away! The herd was already on the road, and the dogs were not doing their job.

Sarah:

In some sense, they were doing their job – at least the guard dog was! This is an integration of certain kinds of relations again. Anthropologist Ghassan Hage has argued that domestication has a lot to do with what humans think about their role in the world: the idea that everything in the world exists for a reason and is potentially there for human use. He suggests domestication is actually an ideology, spread everywhere: we domesticate everything for our own use.





Sarah:

What I was trying to understand in paying attention to the animals was how we create different borders for humans and animals. The animals have to fit in the margins we leave, or else we create these whole other border regimes, like with the international transport of livestock.



Lena:

We also went to Israel-Palestine. This was my third trip there, and I already knew something about regulations and how to move around.

Sarah:

For centuries, the nomadic peoples of this area have herded camels, sheep, and goats. They were also traders and sometimes smugglers with a very important ability: communicating across large stretches of desert.

If you live in a city and want to communicate across a desert, you need people who are able to find their way through it. The Bedouin thrived by creating links between desert cities, so they were also city-oriented people in that sense. But in recent decades, the politics of border systems has made nomadic life hard – and even harder for their animals. Now closed borders are seen as better than open ones, which makes it difficult for the Bedouin to live the way they once did.





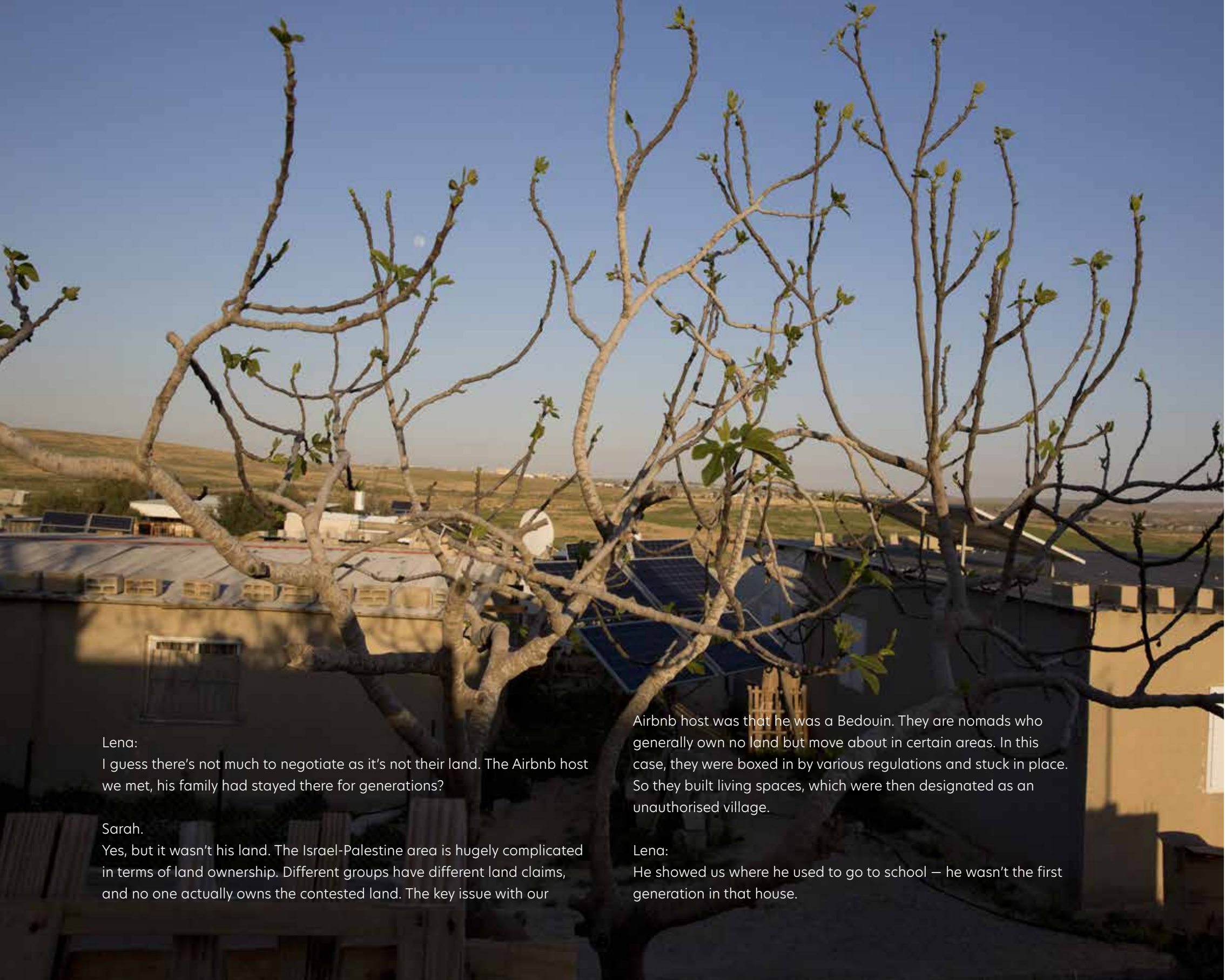
Lena:

In one picture, we're looking at camels through a fence. That was a powerful juxtaposition: on the fence, there's a sign of upscale houses being built. I recognise this development: an area becomes too desired, and people (and in this case, camels) have to stay on "the other side".

Sarah:

That place was an occupied settlement, built by Israelis on land that had been co-opted for the purpose, without negotiating it with Bedouin or anyone else in the area who might be affected by the building.





Lena:

I guess there's not much to negotiate as it's not their land. The Airbnb host we met, his family had stayed there for generations?

Sarah.

Yes, but it wasn't his land. The Israel-Palestine area is hugely complicated in terms of land ownership. Different groups have different land claims, and no one actually owns the contested land. The key issue with our

Airbnb host was that he was a Bedouin. They are nomads who generally own no land but move about in certain areas. In this case, they were boxed in by various regulations and stuck in place. So they built living spaces, which were then designated as an unauthorised village.

Lena:

He showed us where he used to go to school — he wasn't the first generation in that house.



Sarah:

The houses were built earlier on, but it wasn't a village – just some houses. Now the place has been given a name as a village, which is illegal from the Israeli authorities' point of view. They never gave permission to settle a village there, so they knock it down every so often. But what's very cool is that this Bedouin man set up an Airbnb rental – and thus managed to get Google Maps to indicate his location and put the place literally on the map!

Lena:

That's a huge and powerful thing that was never possible before.

Sarah:

Yes, even in the 1990's it was still hard for me to get detailed topographic maps of the Epirus region. They were usually in possession of the army and considered very delicate information. Google Maps and GPS have completely revolutionized things. The ability of one man, who has a disagreement about whether or not he has a right to have a village in the place where he grew up, to get his place on the maps irrespective of what the Israeli army says – it's actually a very Crosslocations thing! The mapping system of a private company and GPS satellites map the planet differently than political authorities that claim the right to designate what happens on that land.



Lena:

What is he telling you in the picture where he shows the doorframe with the little sign?

Sarah:

That's an eviction notice: the place was going to be torn down again. This conflict between many Bedouin and Israeli authorities shows us Crosslocations in action. The government sees the land as a static object. It wants to put borders around the land and control it. The nomadic people see the land differently. For them, it's something they move through and something that is changing with the seasons, with the needs of animals and humans, even markets. It's a more dynamic and mobile relationship with the land.





Lena:

Wadi al Latif is a small area on the West Bank with very little possibility to move around. I heard a story of camels one day strolling into a military governed area there, getting shot by soldiers who were bored and wanted target practice.

Sarah:

It was a military shooting range across the mountain there. A very bad place for camel herders to be, but they didn't have much choice. What's more, there was another unauthorised settlement built on a hill above them, and raw sewage was dumped into their water source. Those kinds of things are done deliberately to just push them to leave.

Lena:

Those people had lots of goats and some camels. Were they nomads? Were they moving?

Sarah:

Some were – but that was difficult as the West Bank is such a thin strip of land. The problem was that there were such delicate relationships between family groups. One group was forced to buy a variety of new types of goats – black goats were no longer allowed for whatever reason – and these newly imported goats turned out to have some diseases. Neighbouring groups usually interbreed their animals to prevent inbreeding. Now the groups which had managed to keep the original black goats didn't want to interbreed them with the diseased goats, leading to strained relations. This is an example of the kinds of things that affect the social and cultural relations between people.



Lena:

On the bus from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, I sat next to a young woman who was in the army. She had her earphones on and an assault rifle next to me. Philippe, our cartographer, was talking to you in English and kept saying “ Hamas” a little too often. The woman took off her earphones and started listening, and I got a bit nervous because she did have the gun on her. So I said in Swedish, “Do you really need to use the h-word so much?” and Philippe answered in Norwegian: “I think there is still freedom of speech in Israel and will keep on using the word.” I use my gut instinct when travelling, and of course, you don’t know if you’re exaggerating, but you do want to be careful.

Sarah:

Those assault rifles are pretty big! The soldiers are responsible for their own guns, so they have to carry them around with them; they can’t leave them in lockers. It’s completely unheard of in most democratic countries to carry a gun like this on public transport, and often when the military goes on holidays or weekends, they are in civilian clothes and carry the guns on their backs.



These photos illustrate my point in working with the animals. When you pay attention to things most people don’t pay attention to – like a dog apparently just wandering around – you start to find different structures and organisations. They are part of parallel worlds that work with different rules. Our world and these other worlds can coexist in certain places, but often they are seen as too much of a conflict or a distraction and are not allowed. The animals in the photos tell a story of what can coexist and what cannot.





Contemporary threads of a historical trade: the Istanbul Grand Bazaar and its iconic carpet trade

Patricia Scalco

Once the capital of three empires — Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman — Istanbul is Turkey's largest city. For centuries it has figured as a key commercial node. Located within the city's historic quarters, the Istanbul Grand Bazaar played a fundamental role in highlighting and further developing Istanbul's role in connecting and disconnecting multiple locations across six centuries.

Resilient and adaptable, the Bazaar has survived fires and floods, natural disasters, and economic and political crises across the centuries. Since its foundation in the 15th century, textiles and rugs have played an essential part in its economy. The carpet business has absorbed and resisted the impact of each and every one of these struggles. As old as the Bazaar itself, in the carpet trade, we find its most skilled and fierce tradesmen whose lives are, often from childhood, intertwined with their craft.





Lena:

There's so much to photograph in Istanbul and no lack of interesting stuff. Our trips were packed and intense, and we met some highly interesting people.

Patricia:

Istanbul is a large and vibrant city, as captivating for its many beauties as for its urban and social complexities. I have done extensive anthropological research in Istanbul for over 12 years and carried out an ethnographic study about the circulation of goods and everyday life in the Istanbul Grand Bazaar. This is the oldest covered market in the world and has played a key role in the consolidation of Istanbul as a powerful geopolitical node.

Patricia:

The Bazaar is one of Turkey's most visited tourist sites. The history of carpet trade in the Bazaar is connected with the history of travel and commercial exchange between Europe and Central Asia. Explorers and tradesmen converged in Istanbul to rest and exchange goods and ideas. The rugs used by travellers from Central Asia to keep warm during their long journeys were acquired by European travellers at the Bazaar and incorporated into European homes in the 16th to 17th century.

Lena:

So the Bazaar is a kind of passageway?

Patricia:

Yes, metaphorically, the Bazaar is a place of passageways. It is a hub connecting and disconnecting places and promoting the circulation of goods, people and ideas. It has shown incredible resilience both as a physical structure and a social environment. Along the way, the Bazaar has acquired walls and become covered. The doors of the Bazaar connect it to surrounding workshop areas where artisans work on the products distributed inside. While the Bazaar has faced significant changes, it is remarkable in its elasticity and adaptive resources and has retained its primary function as a place of trade.

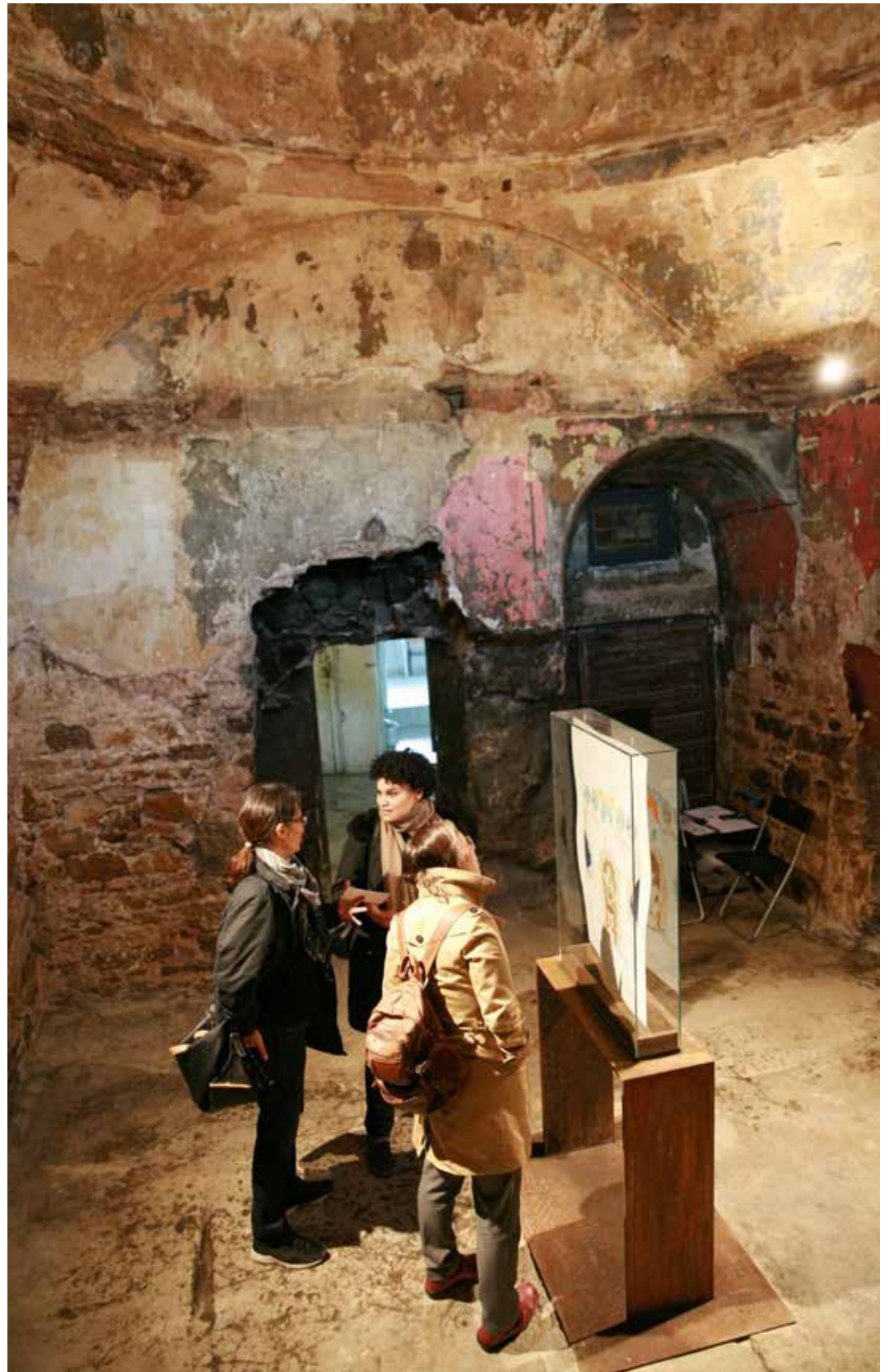
Lena:

How many doors were there to the Bazaar in total? We found a new one!

Patricia:

The area around the Bazaar is intense, and although it may look like the Bazaar ends once we find ourselves outside its walls, that is not the case. In the immediate surroundings, we find structures that were once workshops (hans) where goods sold in the Bazaar were manufactured by skilled craftsmen. Nowadays, the hans host services and retail activities supporting the Bazaar. This is an area of significant commercial interest for the local population, much less so for tourists.







Maia

BAZAAR
YOLGEÇEN HAN

ARALYA
GOLD
AUR
ARAYN
BOAATO
DIAMOND
ANGRO-T
POZUA

Patricia:

The Bazaar is still expanding. In the last five years, it even added one more door to its existing 21. We found out that people mostly didn't know about door 22, which used to be a security gate. Each door leads to streets within the Bazaar that carry names related to trades available in a given area. When walking outside, the doors lead into areas where respective workshops were once located.

Lena:

You had a map of the 21 doors. Finding them was a struggle! We got lost many times. We visited once during the day and once early in the morning when it was just being opened.

Patricia:

The Bazaar is massive. We are talking about more than 60 streets and 3000 shops. Its labyrinthine nature can be overwhelming. The size combined with the people and the many activities within it has a dazzling effect, reminiscent of the ways in which the Bazaar has been mystified.

I became intrigued by how the crowds outside the Bazaar contribute to the Bazaar's perceived dimensions. We did an experiment where we walked the external perimeter of the Bazaar at different hours during weekdays, following the same route and keeping track of our mobility and pace. This helped us understand how the experience of moving in a crowded versus an empty area skews perception. During a regular day, at working hours, there are so many people crammed together that it took us six hours to do the walk. Then we met at 6 am, three hours before the Bazaar opened when the streets were mostly empty. We did the same walk in 1,5 hours!





Lena:

We also experienced the Bazaar when it closed. It was amazing – not many people from outside have been there when the lights and tourists go out. Why was this possible for us?

Patricia:

There was nothing extraordinary going on – we could see the closure of the place, black cloth covering stalls and shops, cats emerging from everywhere, the cleaning and trash collecting. But the inaccessibility of the Bazaar after closing time is a matter of security and of preserving the mystique.



This experience was made possible by months of intense fieldwork carried out prior to our visit. Anthropological fieldwork requires the cultivation of trust between all parties involved and commitment towards the highest ethical standards. Research participants must understand the work the researcher will do and agree to take part in it. Even in the most inaccessible of places, covert research is strictly forbidden.





Lena:

Before our first visit to Istanbul, there'd been a terrorist attack. People on the streets and in the Bazaar said "welcome back" to us visitors and expressed gratitude that we return and trust them again. I felt welcome.



Patricia:

The Bazaar is a tourist attraction par excellence, so any instability beyond Turkey's borders reflects strongly in the flow of Bazaar tourists. In a way, it is possible to have a good sense of what is going on in the world by observing the tourists in the Bazaar! Turkey is a major political and economic force in the region and located in a strategic geopolitical location. The national income is highly dependent on tourism. Until 9/11, US tourists were an important group of customers of the carpet trade. After that, tourism from the US basically stopped and was replaced by Europeans.





Handmade
Cotton
Wool
Silk
Linen
Leather
Metal
Glass
Ceramics
Jewelry
Bags
Shoes
Accessories

FLORIDA
Miami Beach
1988



Lena:

From what I saw, the carpet sellers and actually all other sellers in the Bazaar were men. Are there no women working in the Bazaar?

Patricia:

The Bazaar is a highly masculine environment. Historically, the crafts were only carried out by men associated with specialised guilds. But the Bazaar does not exist isolated from its surroundings. It is fine-tuned to societal changes and absorbs and reflects their impact quickly. It's rare to enter the carpet trade without having grown up in it: most learn the trade as teenagers. Nowadays, it's possible for women to do business in the Bazaar, but there are still very few of them. I only heard of two and did not meet them despite trying.

Lena:

When visiting Cappadocia, we spent time with a family that had three generations of carpet sellers taking care of a store. The youngest considered it a dying profession.

Patricia:

That store is one of a kind. It has operated for decades as a centre connecting weavers, sellers, and customers all over Turkey and abroad. Like the Grand Bazaar, it used to be a caravanserai: a place for travellers and their animals to stop and rest. The business has been in the same family for hundreds of years. The men of three generations all had different perspectives on the trade but agreed that the business was in crisis due to economic and technological changes.





Lena:

Their courtyard was made fancy with carpets everywhere. You had to leave your shoes and could dress up in historical style clothes, and take photos of each other. There was a fee for dress-play and photos, but they kindly let me take pictures for free.

Patricia:

The business owners are aware of the powerful impact of the Ottoman past in how tourists imagine Turkey. They encourage tourists to dress up as sultans and consume orientalist imagery. What we saw was the adaptation of a centuries-old place to the 'Instagram era'. It's a new way of deriving income when interest in purchasing hand-woven carpets wanes.

Young tourists travelling in Cappadocia don't relate to the culture of carpets as their parents did. This reflects the increasing difficulties of younger generations to own a home. This is an example of how you can take a particular item such as a carpet, pull out the threads and see how many layers of social, cultural, and economic life are underneath. The reason you did not have to pay to take photos is bound to their kindness and their understanding that we were not there as tourists, but as an anthropologist and a photographer invested in registering the ways in which carpet sellers cope with changes. They wanted us to witness how the trade has changed, but also how resourceful they are in adapting to it.



Lena:

One carpet seller explained that locals used to order big carpets for their big apartments, defining only the size, leaving the rest to the imagination of the artist-artisans. Now people bring samples of the colours and patterns of existing furniture in their home and expect the new rug to match these items.

Patricia:

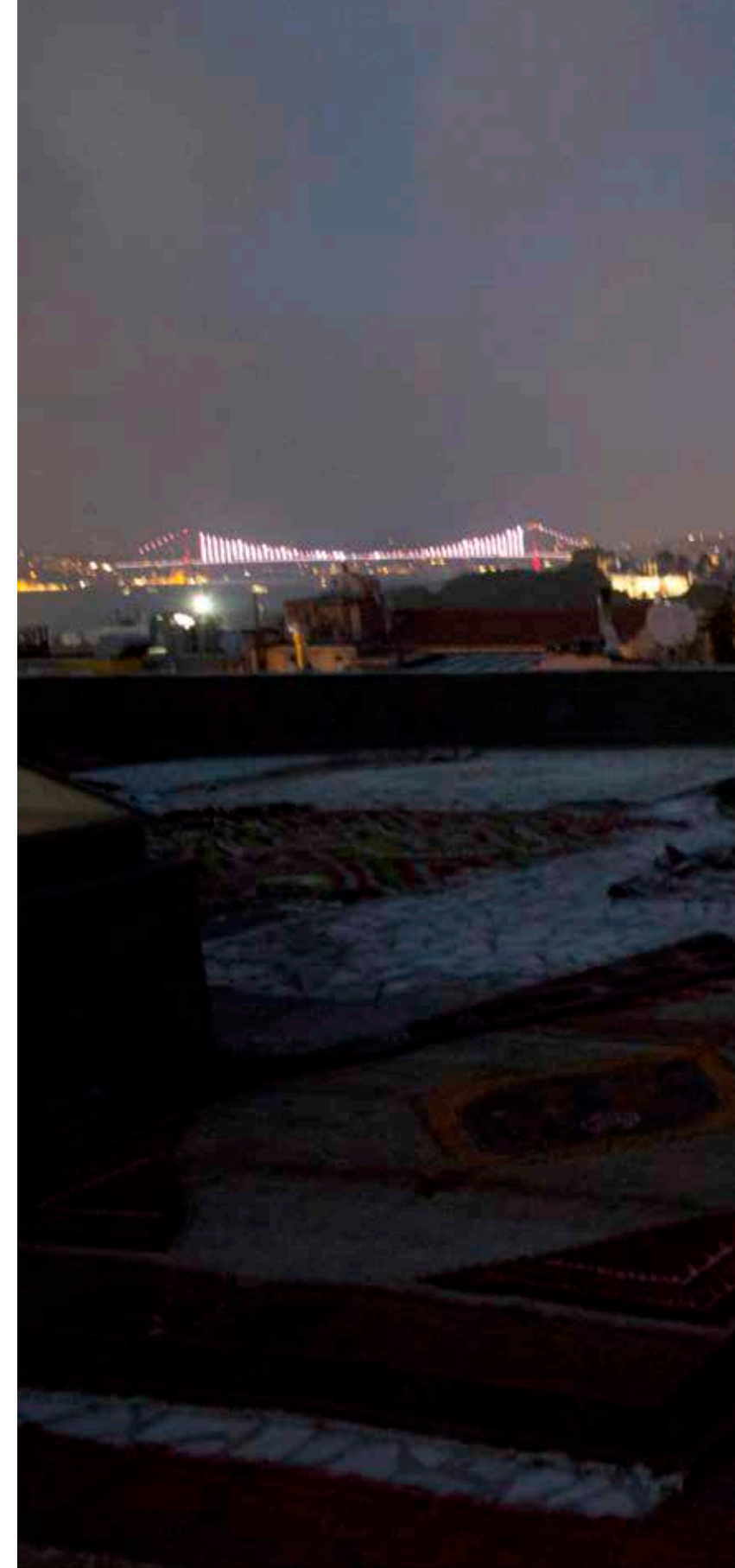
Carpet sellers can be very critical of this approach. As with goods in any market, economic and technological changes contribute to an increase in poor quality products. The carpet trade is strained by competition from mass-produced, machine-made carpets and fakes. It is not only the quality of the goods that is changing, but also the 'quality of the customers', who are less educated and appreciative of arts and crafts, and thus less demanding of quality. Weaving used to be bound to the imagination and artistry of the artisan. In some cases, the creative process gets co-opted by industries following market trends. The tourist may be buying a carpet that is not based on the weaver's artistic vision but on the greed of an industry that reproduces designs and patterns, sometimes on a mass scale.

Lena:

So the fakes happen because people want the "original"?

Patricia:

There's concern and criticism of the Bazaar as a morally grey area because of the storytelling that goes along with carpet selling. In a nutshell, we can say that the storytelling aspect of carpet selling is a skill. This business has been affected by almost permanent crises. It has absorbed the deepest impacts of dramatic economic and technological changes and borne the burden of shifts in geopolitics that scare tourists away. As carpet sellers tell stories about their carpets, they try to hide the fact that romanticised views of carpets being produced by weavers living in 'untouched' bucolic villages, isolated from the challenges of our time, no longer exist.





Patricia:

Lying is not only a moral issue. It has to be understood from the perspective of these contradictions between tourists' romanticised expectations and the sellers' precarity. As one carpet seller explained, customers believe they are not being lied to when buying industrialised goods from supermarkets. They believe what is written on a label because the process is mediated by machines. In carpet selling, there is interaction between people who look into each other's eyes: "Trusting people is much more difficult than trusting machines, even if the machine is operated by people". His perspective shows us some of the difficulties they face and how insightful and rich the experience of being in the Bazaar can be when we are aware of all these extra layers of complexity.



Meteora as seen from Kalambaka, Central Greece and Lepanto as seen from Nafpaktos, Western Greece

Phaedra Douzina-Bakalaki

In modern Greek, a person or an object that is *meteoro* may be elevated, exist in a state of liminality, or simply lack direction. Meteora is a rock formation in Thessaly, Central Greece. In the late eleventh century, Meteora's monoliths became home to a growing Christian Orthodox ascetic community. This community reached its peak in the sixteenth century when, scattered throughout the rock pillars, a total of twenty-four monasteries existed.

For the greatest part of their history, Meteora's monastic settlements were only accessible through precarious ladders latched onto the cliffs and by nets hoisted up by ropes. The construction of a road network in the late 1940s opened the area to growing numbers of visitors, gradually transforming it into a tourist attraction. Today, Meteora constitutes a natural reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage site, one of the largest Christian Orthodox monastic complexes in the world, and one of the most popular mass-tourism destinations in Greece.

The four monasteries and two convents that are active are claimed to receive between one and three million visitors annually. Combining natural beauty with spirituality, Meteora is popular among tourists from all over the world as well as pilgrims from Orthodox majority countries. Perched on high cliffs, the monastic settlements are represented as defying gravity and depicted as a rare collaboration between God and humans. The spectacular landscape, which coalesces nature and culture in dramatic ways, has long formed an object of fascination. Meteora's visual potency has earned it a place in 19th-century topographical engravings, endless coffee-table books, as well as several Hollywood productions, including the 1981 James Bond film *For Your Eyes Only* and the more recent *Game of Thrones*. According to some of my interlocutors, Meteora is one of the most photographed locations in Greece, after the Acropolis of Athens and the island of Santorini.

During the busy summer months, the road network of Meteora is congested with traffic. While some visitors arrive by cars or motorcycles, the vast majority arrive in tour buses. Most often, Meteora is one among several sightseeing destinations. After visiting the monastic settlements and their guided tours, visitors take a few moments to admire the landscape and take pictures. While photography is strictly prohibited inside the monasteries, Meteora's pinnacles offer an abundance of photo opportunities. Some visitors opt for conventional poses while others, equipped with drones and selfie sticks, experiment with panoramic shots and optical illusions. The sight of small camera crews working with travel bloggers and social media influencers is also common. The photographic monumentalisation of Meteora appears to be an indispensable aspect of visitors' experiences of the landscape. Perhaps, for this reason, a great deal of promotional material on Meteora features pictures of people with extended arms, taking photographs of the site at sunset. In these widely circulating images, Meteora often emerges as a pristine landscape detached from its immediate surroundings. Rarely do the jammed roads, colourful souvenir stands scattered around monastery entrances, and the occasional litter make it to these visual renditions. Also often omitted are Kalambaka, a town of 20,000 people, and the adjacent village of Kastraki.

Situated at the foot of the rocky pillars, the communities of Kalambaka and Kastraki are related to Meteora in intimate, ambivalent ways. While their proximity to the iconic rocks has secured locals' access to a robust tourist industry which currently occupies more than 60% of the population in hospitality and accommodation services, Kalambaka and Kastraki are literally and metaphorically located in Meteora's shadow. For most people travelling to Meteora, Kalambaka and Kastraki feature as transit points en route to the rocks or as two unremarkable locations, where one can spend a few nights at most.

Some of my interlocutors reminisce about times past, when Meteora was located ‘at a breath’s distance’ and constituted a place of shepherding and small-scale farming, daily walks, and casual worship. They feel that having transformed into a mass tourism destination, Meteora is now remote and disconnected. Memories of packed squares, frequented by returning tourists who used to stay in campsites and cheap rental rooms, are contrasted with today’s fleeting sightings of packed buses. Some lament the transient nature of Kalambaka, which deprives the town of important profits and burdens it with pollution and administrative costs.

The fact that most trips to Meteora are organised by tourist agencies based in Athens and other major urban centres also causes discontent. Another complaint concerns the ‘monoculture of religious tourism’, which deters other forms of tourism and turns the monastic authorities into main beneficiaries of a product they do not own. Finally, some have dedicated themselves to a struggle against Meteora’s privatisation and the ‘holy law’, which was passed in 199 and established that the rocks constitute ‘holy land’. The ‘holy law’ recognised monastic authorities as the ultimate power holders of Meteora and its uses and introduced a series of prohibitive ordinances aimed at protecting the area’s ‘religious nature’.

How can dominant photographic representations of Meteora be reconciled with the delicate ambiguities and tensions that don’t make it to tourist brochures and coffee table books? How can the visual production of Meteora as iconic, spectacular, and pristine converse with seldom-told stories of power asymmetry and alienation? How can an ethnographer and a photographer work together to shed light on mass tourism’s ambivalent blessings on local communities?

As I walked around Meteora, Kalambaka, and Kastraki with Lena Malm, I became starkly aware of the contradictions at play. In Malm’s pictures, the busy highways of Meteora sit together with Kalambaka’s and Kastraki’s empty streets. Images of religious signs and artefacts come together with images of tourism agencies and souvenir shops. The emblematic monoliths at sunset are complemented by photographs of tourists taking pictures of themselves.





But perhaps this multiplicity is not so much a function of contradiction as one of the angles. These pictures tell Meteora's story from different angles. Depending on one's vantage point, Meteora transforms into an important Orthodox site, a mass-tourism destination, the locomotive of local development, or the spectacular backdrop against which ordinary lives unfold.

The Battle of Lepanto took place in 1571 at the Gulf of Corinth, near modern Nafpaktos, a Western Greek town of 20,000 people. The Battle of Lepanto resulted from competing claims over the Mediterranean basin during westward Ottoman expansion and deep European divisions following the Protestant reformation. The Ottoman invasion of Venetian colonies in Cyprus in 1570 forced Venice to appeal for aid to Pope Pius V, a relentless reformer and inquisitor. Despite conflicting interests among parties, Pious V was eventually able to arrange a coalition to protect Catholic colonies and commercial hubs. The Holy League was a fragile alliance between the Republic of Venice, the Spanish Empire, the Papal States, the Republic of Genoa, and several smaller states and military orders. Don Jon of Austria, the half-brother of King Philip II, led the Holy League.

The allied Catholic fleet reached the island of Cephalonia on October 4th, 1571. There they received news of the fall of the Venetian colony of Famagusta in Cyprus and of the Ottomans' movements in the Corinthian Gulf, near modern-day Nafpaktos, which was under Ottoman occupation. Sultan Selim II ordered Mu-ezzinzade Ali Pasha and his fleet to leave their naval station in Lepanto three days later. In the meantime, the Catholic armada had begun its journey eastwards. The two fleets met soon after, and the naval engagement resulted in the severe defeat of the Ottomans and the death of some forty thousand soldiers and sailors from both sides.

The victory of the Holy League resonated across Catholic Europe. It captured the imagination of Renaissance composers and poets, inspired artwork by Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese, and left an indelible mark on Miguel de Cervantes. He said that his left hand 'became useless at the Battle of Lepanto, to glorify the right one'. Yet, despite this immediate elated climate, the battle's long-term impact was controversial and continues to be debated to this day. In *The Mediterranean*

and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, the historian Fernand Braudel writes that 'historians have joined in an impressively unanimous chorus to say that Lepanto was a great spectacle, a glorious one even, but in the end leading nowhere' (1949:1088).

The weak and exhausted Catholic allies failed to repeat the triumph of Lepanto in the following year, eventually disintegrating. On the other hand, the Ottomans quickly restored their naval forces and continued their largely uninterrupted raids across the Mediterranean for another decade. Thus, Braudel sees the battle as having marked the end of Christendom's prolonged period of depression, driven by the Ottomans' supremacy. He writes: 'If we look beneath the events, beneath that glittering layer on the surface of history, we shall find that the ripples of Lepanto spread silently, inconspicuously, far and wide' (1949:1088).

The ripples of Lepanto continue to spread far and wide. A quick Google search leaves no doubt about Lepanto's contemporary symbolism and centrality in Islamophobic discourse. The US invasion of Afghanistan is said to have taken place on 7 October 2001 to allude to the Battle's stakes and outcomes. Matteo Salvini, Italy's far-right League leader, often holds press conferences against artwork depicting naval engagement. Many alt-right and neofascist clubs across Europe and North America are named after the battle and several anti-Islamic mobilisations. These include the gathering of one million Catholics in Poland on 7 October 2017 to memorialise the event and protest against immigration. The Battle of Lepanto acquires mythological dimensions and features as a symbolic episode in the 'clash of civilisations' in these commemorations. It draws a sharp division between the enlightened Christian West and barbaric rest and allies, the former against the latter in a war believed to be immemorial.

The town of Nafpaktos also holds an annual commemoration of the Battle of Lepanto. It consists of talks, art exhibitions, a re-enactment of the event, and a procession and memorial service for the Catholics killed in battle. However, rather than celebrating the Battle's contemporary political symbolism, Nafpaktos' claim to the Battle is premised on the town's geographical proximity to the site of the naval engagement.

An event of Catholic significance, and therefore absent from official Greek historiography, mass education, and dominant narratives of nationhood and Orthodoxy, the Battle of Lepanto presents Nafpaktians with a riddle as to how the historical event is to be integrated within a meaningful narrative that accentuates location. Once a year, the Nafpaktos's streets are filled with a parade of people dressed in a carnivalesque parody of sixteenth-century European apparel. Their clothing consists of colourful corsets, farthingales, and capes while holding torches, flags, and banners adorned with Christian symbols. On the following evening, Nafpaktos' picturesque port and Venetian fortress transform into a stage that hosts the re-enactment of the historical event.

How does this small coastal town make sense of the past? And how does it envision itself as the focal point of a landmark event that possibly determined the future of Europe and the Mediterranean? Lena Malm's camera lens offered essential insights. Eager to indulge their sixteenth-century personas and show off their elaborate costumes, the parade members were full of joy, light-heartedness, and occasionally, a slight awkwardness. 'I only participate for the dress', said a teenage girl glowing with pride. Less pleased, her younger brother murmured that his mum had dressed him like that.

Three middle-aged women hurriedly stated that they only participated because they wanted to support the municipality's initiative and then asked Lena to take a picture of them. A young man smirked and said, 'Greeks never miss a chance to party!' In these fleeting exchanges with the participants of Lepanto's parade and re-enactment, I realised that the annual commemoration of the event is perhaps more than anything an occasion for effervescence and an opportunity to dress up as someone else and have one's picture taken.









Egypt's project dreams: unfulfilled promises in a re-located nation

Carl Rommel

Egypt's counterrevolutionary era is an era dominated by projects (mashari' in Egyptian Arabic; sing. mashru'). All since the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated President Muhammad Mursi was ousted in a bloody military coup in the summer of 2013, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's regime has rested on two distinct modalities of power: on the one hand, ruthless violence and oppression of every thinkable kind of opposition, whether liberal or socialist, Islamist or secular; on the other hand, a legitimacy based on deeds, action and — more than anything else — projects.

President el-Sisi loves to portray himself as a non-political doer who shuns the 'political' intrigues and quarrels that dominated the years after the January 2011 Revolution: a masculine leader who gets things done instead of talking and debating and launches projects that genuinely benefit the nation.

The president's ambitions mirror those of the people at large. If we articulated the dreams of the revolutionary period in the language of social justice, freedom, civil rights, Islamic ethics, or solidarity, the counterrevolutionary nation-state pivot on promises of spectacular, future-oriented infrastructure projects: thousands of kilometres of new highways and bridges, ambitious land reclamations, industrial zones, a so-called New Suez Canal*, new urban centres sprinkled around the country's expansive deserts, and a New Administrative Capital, projected to house 6.5 million inhabitants by the mid-2020s.

The Egyptian dream of megaprojects is based on the promise of radical newness. Similar to the English word 'project' — which refers to the Latin verb *proicere*, 'throw forth' — the Arabic *mashru'* is derived from *shara'*, to 'enter', 'go into' or

'initiate' something. Thus, by definition, launching a project is to take a step forward into a previously unknown and potentially improved future.

In Egypt today, this promise takes a wide variety of articulations. Whether one studies policy and planning documents, listens to speeches given by the President or his ministers, reads newspapers, or watches regime-friendly talk shows on television, discourses about projects set to shape the future in desirable ways are ever-present.

Projects are seen as key to economic growth, creating jobs and being the locomotive of national development. Moreover, projects will allow the Egyptians to fulfil their age-old dream of breaking free from the geographical constraints of the over-populated Nile valley and carve out brighter futures in the emptiness of the surrounding deserts.

More often than not, the nation's projected future is also heavily visualised. News media, state propaganda, and real estate advertisement generate an enormous corpus of images of the new Egypt materialising as ever more desert projects proliferate: clean, green, ordered; everything that the old nation along the river valley is not.

This new nation aligns with the Gulf Arab aesthetic universe in terms of symbolism and lifestyle. These are images of vast distances, highways, car culture, air-conditioned shopping malls, and villas in gated communities, but few non-commercial public spaces. In this sense, the futuristic nation of megaprojects is not only re-located into the pristine expanses of the deserts. However, it is also

* What the regime calls a New Suez Canal is more precisely an additional lane in a limited section of the canal.

a re-oriented country, and an Egypt tilted distinctly towards the oil-rich neighbours around the Arabian Gulf.

My ethnographic research in the Crosslocations project examines and analyses political and social consequences of such Egyptian dreams of *mashari'* (projects). Premised on the observation that the project constitutes the default organisational template for bringing together resources, personnel, expertise, and money to effectuate bold yet controlled improvements, I ask: How do projects shape and limit dreams of personal and national futures? What kinds of work, aspirations, and gendered subjectivities does the obsession with projects encourage and preclude? What role do project dreams play in contemporary capitalism and statecraft? How does the current project extravagance locate Egypt, somewhere in particular?

Although discourses and images surrounding megaprojects in the desert form a central part of this inquiry, my primary orientation is elsewhere. Thus, the bulk of my research consists of participant observation with lower-middle-class men who dream of, plan, and sometimes launch small investment and business projects in central Cairo: taxis, kiosks, cafés, and small football pitches rented out by the hour.

The stories that my projector-interlocutors tell me supplement and nuance the picture of the Egyptians' project dreams. One thing that becomes clear when speaking to individual Egyptians who set up their projects is that their dreams are grand and modest at the same time. Just like the government, the people I work with like to speak about *mashari'* as one of few available avenues to create something radically new that lasts — to break free from the daily struggle to get by and survive merely and to carve out a more prosperous and comfortable future.

It is precisely for this reason that they spend so much of their time maintaining potential networks and looking for opportunities that could materialise in a project that changes everything. And yet, most people know and accept that such a definite break with the past is highly unlikely. Existing business projects are rarely as profitable and shiny as they appear in one's imagination. Unpredictable factors

tend to interfere and derail projected outcomes and forces people to re-think, re-dream, and re-project. In one part of my writing, these observations have pushed me to call the Egyptian project economy an 'iterative pursuit': a never-ending hunt for projects that never really delivers what it promises, but which nonetheless generates many hopes, activities, work opportunities and values along the way.

Lena Malm's photographs from Cairo make visible several crucial facets of Egypt's project dreams. On the one hand, Lena and I spent time crisscrossing desert cities in the outskirts of the Egyptian capital. Here, we experimented with ways to visually capture the dreams of better tomorrows that Egypt's desert projects conjure up: the aesthetics, spatiality and lived reality of the promise of the desert as it materialises on billboards, in gated communities and shopping malls, and along endless multi-lane highways. But, on the other hand, I introduced Lena to my interlocutors who hunt for business projects in central Cairo. How could her photography capture the more small-scale projects these men dream of, look out for, and sometimes manage to launch?

One thing that transpires in these images is a layering of projects upon other projects. The dream of projects might be based on a promise of creating something radically new from scratch. However, in Cairo's desperately congested urban fabric, projects are almost always constrained by a multiplicity of already existing structures, institutions, laws, and projects.

Indeed, when my interlocutors search for openings to launch new projects, they habitually target in-between sites, inside or on top of other projects: schoolyards at public schools, closed-off parking lots, public parks that have been out of use for a long time. Typically, locating such interstitial spaces (whether physical, financial, or institutional) constitutes a prerequisite for launching a successful project in Cairo today; it is a critical component of my interlocutors' never-ending, iterative hunt. Within this entangled web of projects, it is sometimes difficult to see clearly where one project ends and a new one begins. Lena's photos depict a Cairene world of materially and spatially layered projects as much as it is iterative in a temporal sense.





One overarching ambition of my research is to allow material of different kinds to speak to and cross-illuminate each other. My data suggest that the dream of projects is ‘scalable’, i.e., that there exists an underlying set of historical, material, and affective conditions informing the dream of projects of radically different dimensions. More concretely, I am convinced that it is impossible to fully understand why so many Egyptian men spend so much time hunting for projects without paying attention to the broader Egyptian media landscape where the dream of national mega projects is everywhere.

Conversely, I also propose that ethnographic research with individual projectors can shed novel light on a strong and somewhat bewildering attraction to military-led megaprojects present across Egyptian society. While a masculine ideal stipulating that real men launch projects seems to inform both realms.

A subset of Lena Malm’s photographs from Cairo’s desert satellite cities illustrates another cross-scalar overlap. Looking beyond glossy advertisements and the frontier mentality that conveys cleanliness and greenery, we find numerous desert developments that have been initiated but rarely completed. We also see that projects under construction might look surprisingly similar to abandoned project ruins.

Similar to the layering of new projects upon old ones that characterise the iterative hunt for business projects in central Cairo, it is typical and even expected that desert developments get stalled, modified, and relaunched over again. Also, the promise of radical newness — of creating something out of nothing — never fully materialises in the empty desert. Yet, the projects that generate activities, work, and actions might be as important as the idealised results.

In my research, I conceptualise this intricate interplay between imaginative dreams and hard work as project dreamwork. The Egyptian dream of projects is a dream that is always only partly fulfilled but which nonetheless shapes landscapes, futures, and human subjects across the counterrevolutionary nation.







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Afterword

Lena Malm

Ninnu:

Visiting these (cross)locations through your eyes has been a rich experience, full of life and the kinds of connections and disconnections that the Crosslocations research project was about. In the final chapter of the book, do we get to see which pictures stayed with you the most?

Lena:

I think my favourites are the ones from which I remember the smells, feel the humidity and heat and hear the sounds; when I look at them I'm back where I was in that moment and where, for a moment, I belonged.



Lena:

Like this one from Cairo with stray dogs. They were playing but noticed me with the camera and froze. You can see which dogs wanted to keep playing, and which ones saw me looking!

On the next page there's another picture from Cairo, of a long table that has been laid ready for the Ramadan feast. Shopkeepers have prepared it for people who cannot afford to buy their own meal. I asked to take a picture, and you can easily see who said 'go ahead' and who preferred to turn away.







Ninnu:

This picture with the bicycle and reflecting windows is so dreamlike. You play around with reflections in some other shots as well. What are you showing us here?

Lena:

I'm fascinated by photographing through reflections. It has something to do with how I dream. In movies when a person is dreaming, their dreams are always shown from outside: we see the dreamer and what's happening to them. My dreams don't look like that – in dreams I have a first-person view and see what's in front of me. In photography I love that I can do both: I can show what I see, but simultaneously also show where I am.

Look at the blue picture: you see a little bicycle which seems to belong in a street, right? But on a closer look you see some cardboard boxes, a sign and a can of some sorts, and start to perceive that the paper is on the floor and not on the street, right? And that the text is in reverse, so it has to be a reflection. So you see the inside and outside in the same picture: you see both what I see and where I am.

Before the Crosslocations research team came aboard, I did two trips: one to Greece and Albania with economist James Korovilas, another to Marseille with anthropologist Claire Bullen.

The bus picture is from Gjirokaster in Albania and the window from Finikounda, Greece. In the latter I wanted to show the sleepy town in winter, waiting for vacation season to start. I call it 'Absent friends.'









Lena:

Phaedra Douzina-Bakalaki and I took the bus to Ouranoupolis, a little town where pilgrims take the boat to Mount Athos. On this trip I did the same again: photographed through the reflecting windows, so you can see both where the trip is taken and how. I was thinking of pilgrimage, how it feels and what it looks like, and pretended the bus ride was mine.



Ninnu:

Did you run into any ethical issues regarding people and things you photographed? I know there were some things you wanted to take photos of but couldn't, for various reasons.

Lena:

In Ouranoupolis there was a pilgrim who wasn't allowed on the boat, and who with his head bowed left the pier after the boat had sailed off – that's a picture I didn't have the heart to take.









Lena:

There are also pictures I'm not allowed to take. Upon sharing pictures from the streets of Cairo on my web page, someone asked whether there are no women in Cairo. There are, but they didn't actively jump in front of my camera saying "photograph me!" the way men did. Instead they turned their heads away from me, subtly communicating "no pictures please".

I also wasn't allowed to photograph Palestinian women over 16 years of age in the village we visited on the West Bank; military checkpoints; certain areas in the refugee camp of Burj El Barajneh in Beirut; or nuns in the nunnery outside Thessaloniki.

I could, of course, have photographed in secret. But I don't hide what I'm doing.

Except once, kind of. I took a picture in Beirut of women begging in front of a street vendor. I photographed them through the reflection of the bread stall. I don't regret it, because it shows what people with coins in their pockets can so easily have while others need to beg for it. If I had faced the women the picture would have been very different — they would have posed and we wouldn't see what they see.



Ninnu:

There are discussions concerning representation and orientalism when photographing veiled women. What is your take on this?

Lena:

I don't feel that's my issue. I photograph what I see, and I don't know why I should look away because it doesn't fit someone's description. I'm fully aware of the fact that I choose what interests me. In some way I might also have a positive bias. To me, being a non-muslim and coming from Northern Europe where Islam is often portrayed in a negative light, it is important to show the joy and everydayness I see in people who don't look or dress like me.

In the hustle of a big flea market outside Marseille a woman suddenly stood in front of me saying "Take my picture! I want you to do it because I'm Muslim, and things are the way they are!"
So I did.



Contributors

Sarah Green is the leader of the Crosslocations project and is Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Helsinki. Her work on the anthropology of space, place, location, and borders in various parts of the European region left a question unanswered that Crosslocations attempts to address: how is it possible to be somewhere in particular, somewhere else and nowhere in particular all at the same time, and in the same place? She has carried out fieldwork on the Greek-Albanian border in southern Greece, London, Manchester, and across the Mediterranean region within the Crosslocations project. The themes of her research have varied: the politics of gender and sexuality (*Urban Amazons*, St Martins Press 1997), border politics (*Notes from the Balkans*, 2005), and a variety of other topics, such as the introduction of the internet to Manchester, the understanding of money and trade in the Aegean region, and, within Crosslocations, the spatial politics of the transit of animals and attempts to manage the spread of zoonotic disease across the Mediterranean region. You can contact her via sarah.green@helsinki.fi.

Phaedra Douzina-Bakalaki is a Greek social anthropologist based at the University of Helsinki. Her research is situated at the intersection of livelihood, social reproduction, and political transformation. Her postdoctoral research for Crosslocations explored the shifting landscape of church-state relations in contemporary Greece and the commemoration and political utilisation.

For her doctorate degree (2017, University of Manchester), Phaedra conducted extensive fieldwork in the crisis-afflicted town of Xanthi, Northern Greece, where she explored the impact of austerity on provisioning practices. Her research focused on three fundamental goods – food, healthcare, and clothing – and their respective distribution sites. Reflecting on ethnographic material gathered at a soup kitchen, a clothing bank, and a social clinic, she argued that feeding, clothing, and healing amidst sweeping austerity also means invoking historically resilient conceptions of social order and the good life.

In the past, Phaedra has pursued research interests in Islamic charity and its significance within Turkey's shifting socio-political landscape and the Macedonian Question. Phaedra holds MA (2011) and MRes (2012) degrees in Social Anthropology (University of Manchester) and a BSc in Psychology (2010, Goldsmiths College, University of London).

Samuli Lähteenaho is a PhD researcher in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Helsinki. His research interests include the Levant region, issues of urban politics, space, and environment. Samuli's PhD research, part of the Crosslocations project, looks at the politics of the coastline in the Lebanese capital Beirut. Based on extensive fieldwork during the 2017–2019 period with environmental groups and other parties engaged with the coastline, his research examines how questions of environment, waste, urban space, volunteerism, and activism coalesce in the changing significance of Beirut's coastline.

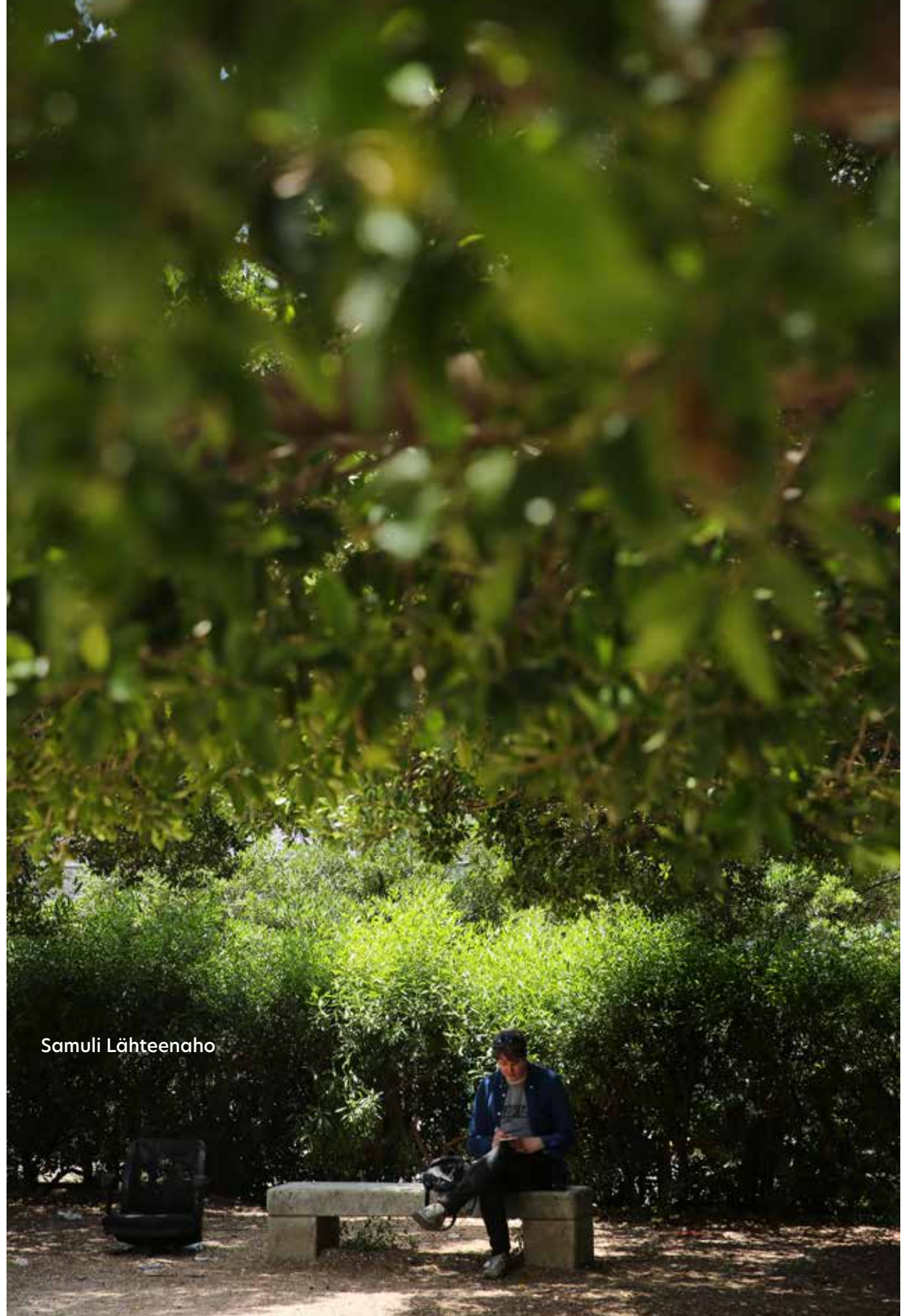
Samuli has conducted ethnographic fieldwork on and off in Lebanon since 2015, when he carried out his MA thesis project on young residents of Beirut, exploring how they come to a sense of their relative location in the world in relation to their lives in Beirut and their dreams and experiences of migration. He earned his MA in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Helsinki in 2016.



Phaedra Douzina-Bakalaki



Sarah Green



Samuli Lähteenaho

Lena Malm has been working as a professional photographer since finishing her studies at ICP (International Center of Photography) in New York in 1993. She learned graphic design while working at the Swedish language weekly *Ny Tid* in Helsinki, Finland, and has since also worked as a graphic designer. She was the photographer of the COST project East-BordNet, which resulted in the book *Borderwork*. In 2013 she founded her publishing house Jasilti. Visit www.lenamalm.fi for more of her work.

Carl Rommel is a social anthropologist with a specialism in contemporary Egypt. He has lived in Cairo on and off since 2007, conducting 36 months of ethnographic fieldwork. Carl's research in *Crosslocations* examines Egyptian men's strong commitment to future-oriented 'projects'. It draws on long-term participant observation with lower-middle-class men who launch small business projects in Cairo and analyses of state-led mega projects through discursive, cartographic, technical, and historical data. His research contributes to scholarships on neoliberal time and masculinity, authoritarian statecraft, and the 'projectification' of society, economy, and academia by reading together material of vastly diverging scales. Carl completed dual degrees in Sociotechnical Engineering and the History of Science and Ideas at Uppsala University between 2001 and 2007. After a period of Arabic studies and freelance journalism in Cairo, he moved on to SOAS, University of London, where he earned his MA (2009) and PhD (2015) in social anthropology. Based on twenty months of ethnographic fieldwork in Cairo between 2011 and 2013, his doctoral dissertation traces transformations within the emotional politics of Egyptian football before and after the 2011 Revolution. His dissertation has been redeveloped into an ethnographic monograph – *Egypt's Football Revolution: Emotion, Masculinity, and Uneasy Politics* – published by the University of Texas Press in 2021.

Rommel has also held research fellowships at Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin and the University of Bern. In addition, he has taught social anthropology at the Free University in Berlin and at the University of Helsinki.

Patricia D. Scalco is a social anthropologist and a postdoctoral researcher within the Trade, Transit, and Travel project under the Academy of Finland. She earned her PhD from the University of Manchester. Her doctoral research, currently being transformed into a monograph, explored the role of sexual moralities in delineating private and public spaces in contemporary Istanbul. Under the TTT project, she will further explore constructions of space and place in the area of the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul.

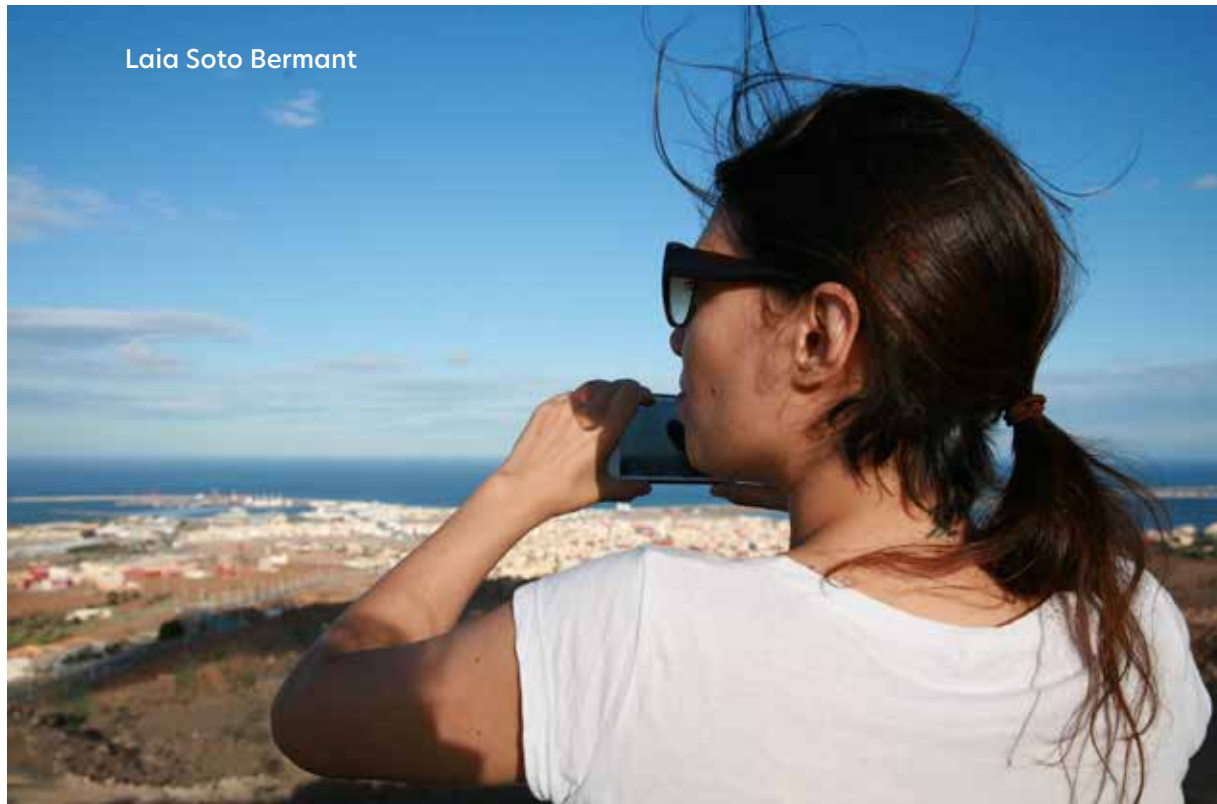
Patricia has lived and conducted extensive fieldwork in Istanbul since 2006, earning her MA in Social Anthropology from Yeditepe University. She is an Early Career Researcher member of the Editorial Board of the *Sociological Review* and a fellow at the Netherlands Institute of Turkey. A dual citizen of Brazil and Italy, Patricia holds a degree in Law and is affiliated with the Brazilian Bar Association.

Laia Soto Bermant joined the Trade, Transit, and Travel project as a postdoctoral researcher in 2016, and the ERC Cross-Locations project in 2019. She earned her doctorate from the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Oxford. Before joining the TTT project, she held a postdoctoral scholarship at the School of Transborder Studies in Arizona State University and a lectureship at Bournemouth University. She is currently the editor-in-chief of the EASA flagship journal *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* (2018–2022) and is currently working on a new project on conspiracy theories about Covid-19.

She has conducted fieldwork in Spain and Morocco since 2008. She has a long-standing interest in the relationship between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean – particularly in the connections and disconnections generated between the Iberian Peninsula and Morocco since the time of Al-Andalus (711–1492 AD). In *Trade, Transit and Travel*, she explores the relative location of a Spanish exclave located in north-eastern Morocco: the city of Melilla, under Spanish sovereignty since the late 15th century and part of the Schengen space since the early 1990s.



Carl Rommel



Laia Soto Bermant



Patricia D. Scalco

Thank you

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