IOANNA WAGNER TSONI

AFFECTIVE BORDERSCAPES

Constructing, Enacting and Contesting Borders Across
the Southeastern Mediterranean

AFFECTIVE BORDERSCAPES

Dissertation series in
Migration, Urbanisation, and Societal Change

Doctoral dissertation in International Migration and
Ethnic Relations
Department of Global Political Studies
Faculty of Culture and Society

Information about the time and place of public defence
and the electronic version of the dissertation:
<http://hdl.handle.net/2043/30226>

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ISBN (Malmö) 978-91-7877-024-3 (print)
ISSN (Malmö) 978-91-7877-025-0 (pdf)

Printed by Holmbergs AB, Malmö 2019

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Across the Southeastern Mediterranean

Malmö University, 2019
Faculty of Culture and Society

**Dissertation series in
Migration, Urbanisation and Societal Change**

**Faculty of Culture and Society
Malmö University**

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
THOSE WHO SHARED THE STORIES AND HELD THE SPACE
IT TOOK TO MAKE IT
IN TRIBUTE TO THEIR COURAGE AND RESILIENCE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work grew over an extended period of time – from 2012 to 2019. Many hands tended to it – and to me – over these long years. I owe thanks to numerous people, both named and unnamed, and I hope the latter will forgive any lapses on my part.

I must begin by offering my deepest gratitude to all those who shared their stories with me in all the places this research took me, although they must, regrettably, remain unnamed. Their resilience and resolve set and kept me on this path and stay with me always.

I am indebted to my supervisors, Bo Petersson and Carina Listerborn, for going above and beyond their institutional role and providing ample support, encouragement and guidance to navigate both academia as well as life's unforeseen turns over the last six years.

While the contents of this research were taking shape, I was fortunate to receive constructive critique and helpful suggestions by numerous scholars. Russell King's generosity in sharing his knowledge and instilling vision in early researchers, such as myself, has been formative to the academic and personal development required for the completion of this project. I have profited greatly from the advice and argument of colleagues who have served either as discussants or members of different examination committees for their rigorous and insightful commenting on various parts and versions of this work: Per Markku Ristilammi, Mikael Spång, Maja Povrzanovic-Frykman, Tomas Wikstrom, Jussi Laine, Marie Sandberg, Anja Karlsson-Franck, Christian Fernandez, Guy Baeten, Oscar Hemer, and Martin Lemberg-Pedersen. To those I should add the contributions of readers and commentators at numerous conferences and public presentations of my ideas. Despite their invaluable input, however, I remain responsible for all of this book's shortcomings.

The assistance of those who helped with translations from the many languages and dialects that my material was often expressed in, and supplemented it with background cultural commentary on its content should also be acknowledged: Fakhri, Bilar, Wassim, Siddiqi, Serge, Suraj, Hassan and Salim your help has been indispensable.

Special thanks are owed to the numerous people working for the GPS administration and the MAU Library services who have promptly and solicitously helped me navigate any work- or publication related issues. I would also like to thank my colleagues at Malmö University and the MUSA program.

I am grateful to the editors and anonymous reviewers who have commented on this compilation's individual papers, and to the publishers for granting their permission to reproduce them.

My personal debts are long. I am deeply and sincerely grateful to the friends, both near and far, who have held unconditional space for me through life's turns and travails. Maria Mavraki, your encouragement and faith in me has been a constant source of strength and sustenance. Brigitte Suter, who you are and what you do – and how – both within and outside academia have set an unmatched benchmark for me. Michiel van Meeteren, 'real artists ship' as you kept reminding me. If it wasn't for your unrelenting insistence, encouragement and trust in my voice and viewpoint, I would have never taken that first step, nevermind reached shipping day. I owe you this.

Marlene Paulin Kristensen, Evie Papada, Angeliki Dimaki-Adolfson, Alexandra Bousiou, Katerina Rozakou and Giorgos Tyrikos-Ergas, I am grateful for all the discussions and the critical insights on my research through your intimate knowledge our shared field. Louis Konstantinou, thank you for accompanying my walks around Plateia Amerikis, and capturing the grit of local life so sharply through your lens. Minja, Miguel, Afroditi, Paula, Geoff, Salim, Suzanne, thank you for the necessary distractions from writing and for filling those long years with laughter, conversations, companionship, dinners, road trips, phone calls, messages and visits.

Gratitude and respect for their service are owed to the many fellow rescuers and/or volunteers I had the luck of crossing paths and sharing shifts with all these years in Athens, Lesvos and Malmö. Dimitris, Thanos, Christina, Amanda, the crews of rescue vessels Alpha and Bravo, and those of the radio code relay centers Romeo and Juliette in Northern Lesvos, thank you for making the blur and brokenness of those long days and nights bearable, somehow.

Anna Pantelia, I owe special thanks to you for taking and sharing the photograph featured on the cover of this book with me: it pulled into focus the elusive border I tried to describe back in 2015 and helped me never lose sight of it again.

To my mother and father, *από καρδιάς ευχαριστώ* for giving me the opportunities and experiences, and not sparing me the challenges, that have shaped me and the ways I perceive and portray the world, complicated as it might be. As this book leaves my hands, my father, whose remarks I was anticipating, will not be here to see it. My most painful regret is that he passed away during its final preparation stage. And yet, I find a certain consolation in that he had received and read some of its parts which to this day are most dear to me just in time to allow for one last conversation, a final word of approval.

Noone has shouldered the burdens of this work – the ache, withdrawal and aggravation – but also cheered genuinely for the smallest of joys more than my beloved Markus. Four moves, three deaths, two births and one renovation on top of spinning this dissertation out, your support, encouragement, patience and unwavering love are a testament to your innate kindness, effortless positivity and strong character. Thanks for your art direction, home keeping groundwork and for reminding me to always remember why I started. But most of all, thanks for the wonder of our sons. This book was written with them squirming and wriggling in my belly and on my lap and will always carry their colourful touch – and their odd keystroke when I wasn't looking. We've made it through the dog days boys, now onwards to the better times I owe you!

Gnestahöjden, October 2019

SUMMARY

Border control and migration management are commonly considered to be predominantly rational and dispassionate processes. Their functions and filtering mechanisms, however, are nowadays increasingly underpinned by the instrumental top-down exertion of affective power and the cultivation of emotional dispositions among political communities. At the same time, compliance to- or contestation of these forces manifests in a ‘bottom up’ manner through the transgressive patterns of human mobilities and mobilisations around borders, which can be similarly affectively-driven. Yet, the role of affective practices in the modulation of the borderwork undertaken by a variety of actors has been systematically overlooked in public and political discourse, while remaining academically under-researched.

This dissertation addresses this oversight by inquiring into bordering processes and migration patterns across the southeastern Mediterranean and its Aegean appendix from a perspective that accounts for their affective dimensions aside from their legal, infrastructural and political causes and consequences. It examines the impact of various actors’ affective practices on the construction, enactment and contestation of *affective borderscapes* in this region and how those processes manifest and link up at multiple scales across space and time.

Grounded in border studies, affective geography, migrant liminality and critical mobilities, the notion of affective borderscapes constitute this study’s original contribution to knowledge. They are conceptualized as liminal, overlapping landscapes which function as contact zones and as charged fields of interaction and affective transmission between shifting configurations of animate and inanimate actors and the powers, politics and imaginaries that permeate them.

This research is ontologically rooted in constructivism while drawing on an interpretivist epistemology that adheres to a hermeneutic-

phenomenology. Long-term ethnographic engagement with various communities and individuals that have been passing through or inhabiting several locations along the much-fraught Aegean borders in times of major economic, social and geopolitical upheaval has yielded a wealth of qualitative data on the Aegean borderscape's affective facets. This material has underpinned the five peer-reviewed papers and one short film essay of this compilation thesis, which pursue the study's main inquiry from complementary methodological and theoretical angles in several sociospatial contexts.

The results indicate that the affectively-charged practices and interactions of various non/human actors are entangled 'from below' even if incrementally, in the establishment, enaction and contestation of the practices, powers, materialities, subjectivities and imaginations that shape borderscapes in a 'top-down' manner, from the plane of overarching authorities, institutions and social collectivities. Variable affects appear to 'stick' and cluster thickly within the Aegean borderscape, and upon the bodies of those that populate it, causing it to appear denser and intensified around supra/national authorities' border demarcations. However, these affects and the spatialities they give rise to are only loosely connected to territorial delimitations. Instead, they defy territorial entrapment manifesting in a flickering manner across and beyond national spaces. Their affects and after-effects embed themselves like shrapnel onto different bodies, following them through space and triggering emotions, sensations, physical states and atmospheres, which form a kind of 'connective tissue' across seemingly unrelated social, spatial and temporal points.

The significance of this research rests on the breadth and value of its empirical material, the variety of its methodological orientation, and the capacity of the affective borderscapes notion, the study's core theoretical contribution, to acquire and mobilise knowledge, indicate directions for cutting-edge research, and potentially impact policy and practice: from the design and application of human-centered border and migration policies, to the planning and execution of related services and advocacy initiatives.

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LIST OF MENTIONED LOCATIONS

Map 1: List of locations mentioned in this dissertation. Map by the author.

1 Alexandroúpoli	C7	9 Kará Tepe	D7	17 Omónoia square	E5
2 Athens	E5	10 Kypséli	E5	18 Paganí	D7
3 Ayvalik	D7	11 Lesvos	D7	19 Pátras	E4
4 Évros river	B/C7	12 Mólyvos	D7	20 Piraeus	E5
5 Heráklion	G6	13 Mólyvos Lighthouse	D7	21 Plateía Amerikís	E5
6 Idoméni	B4	14 Mória	D7	22 Plateía Koliátsou	E5
7 Istanbul	B9	15 Mykonos	F6	23 Thessaloniki	C5
8 Izmir	E7	16 Mytiléne	D7		

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following publications and visual projects:

Paper 1

Tsoni, I. (2013). 'African border-crossings in a 'city of Others': Constellations of irregular im/mobility and in/equality in the everyday urban environment of Athens', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 27(1), pp. 141–169.

Paper 2

Tsoni, I. (2016). "They won't let us come, they won't let us stay, they won't let us leave'. Liminality in the Aegean borderscape: The case of irregular migrants, volunteers and locals on Lesbos', *Journal of Human Geography*, 9(1), pp. 35-46.

Paper 3

Wagner Tsoni, I., Karlsson-Franck A. (2019). 'Writings on the wall: Textual traces of transit in the Aegean borderscape'. *Borders in Globalisation Review*, 1(1), pp. 9-23.

Paper 4

Wagner Tsoni, I. (2019). "'Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border": A visual archaeogeography of the Aegean borderscape', *K/JNESH SPACE*, 2.

Paper 5

Wagner Tsoni, I. (2019). 'Parsing the Aegean affective borderscape', *Journal of Narrative Politics*, 6(1), pp. 4-21.

Visual Project

Wagner Tsoni, I. (2019). 'Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border'. *Journal of Narrative Politics*, 6(1). Available at: <https://jnp.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/default/article/view/118/115>

Permissions to publish the papers and the visual project included in this thesis have been obtained from the journals of their original publication.

The visual project '*Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border*' has been screened at the following academic events, followed by oral presentations and/or discussion with the audience:

Willy Brandt Guest Professor 15th Anniversary Symposium (*Malmö, January 2016*).

Genusforskning och samhället/Gender Studies Day Malmö Högskola (*Malmö, March 2016*).

Svenska Nätverket för Europaforskning i Statsvetenskap (SNES) Spring Conference (*Malmö, March 2016*).

'SAFE PASSAGE' special feature screening of Malmö Migration Movies (*Malmö, March 2016*).

International Conference on Migration Irregularisation and Activism (*Malmö, June 2016*).

'Transit Europe: Mobility Communication and Governance' ØRECOMM Symposium (*Malmö, September 2016*).

Internationellt om Malmö Högskolan (*Malmö, November 2016*).

Public screenings of the film have been invited at:

City Academy Bristol (*Bristol, February 2016*).

Utställningen Tema Flykt - White Box, Orkanenbiblioteket (*Malmö, April 2016*).

A shorter adaptation of the film was submitted to the 'AAG Students' Shorts Film Competition' of the Association of American Geographers' Annual Meeting (*Boston, April 2017*).

1. PROLOGUE

From the rough downtown days of 2012 Athens and its longer, harsher nights, little – if anything – remains.

A lot has been lost on the way, and almost every place or person that took part in the making of this research has, by now, metamorphosed or disappeared. Many have died. The whereabouts of others are no longer known. Familiar places nowadays remain such only by name. Life paths that had once crossed due to necessity or circumstance diverged over time.

This study was set off in central Athens, in the run-down down area around Plateía Amerikís, following the trajectories and narratives of undocumented border-crossers who passed through. We might had been brought together by different forces back then, them and I, yet the borders' unsettling appeal transfixed and terrified us just the same. In the coming years, as Europe's border politics and the limits of its territory and power kept becoming ever more complex, the frontiers we had been pushing against, and which, in turn, pushed back on us, kept shapeshifting and relocating. From the peripheries to the centers. From nation-states' outposts to the cores of our metropolises. From checkpoints to skin tones; to digitized databases; to one's dependence on inoperative, null and void laws. Throughout the European continent, and beyond, new borderlines emerged while others hardened, further fragmenting a world whose socio-political configurations, as well as its value- and justice systems were being rapidly recast.

Fading recollections, photographs and writings spanning the seven intervening years from the beginning of this exploration to its tentative conclusion are all that are left to tell of the borderlands I ran into, of their people and their passage, and of the stories, places,

aspirations and affects that made them: all the minutiae and the momentous that loosely held this complex and changeable landscape together.

As an ethnographic backdrop for the writings that follow, this prologue aims to offer an illustrative narrative of the early stages of this inquiry; a portrait of the places, people and events that shaped its content and course. I didn't plan to study borders and boundaries when setting out for this research years ago. This early disclosure is necessary, as it will help the reader follow this study's empirical and intellectual trajectory, and their shifts, while also pointing at issues of access, positionality and disposition vis-à-vis research participants and the topic of borders at large.

Inspired by the masterfully crafted and meticulously researched narrative of Jane Ziegelman in her book *'97 Orchard: An edible history of five immigrant families in one New York tenement'* (2010), which explored the assimilation struggles of immigrant families of different backgrounds in the United States at the turn of the century through the 'elemental perspective of the foods they ate' (p. xiii), I initially set out to explore the migrant food geography of central Athens. I focused on Kypseli, one of the city's most socially and culturally vibrant neighbourhoods, which is characterised by the density and mixed use of its urban space, as well as by the high concentration of (predominantly sub-Saharan African) immigrants (Vaiou, 2007; Balampanidis and Polyzos, 2016), as illustrated on Map 2 on the following page.

I began by familiarising myself with the geography of the run-down neighbourhood and by randomly striking up conversations with locals. Some were Greeks but the majority were rather recently arrived migrants, to whom I would repeatedly run into. Gradually, we started hanging out with some of them in parks and playgrounds around the neighbourhood. Three small squares – Plateía Amerikís, Plateía Koliátson and Plateía Kalligá – were favoured spots. These small squares also played a key role in local social life, as their location and landscaping facilitated interpersonal and intercommunal interactions in an informal and flexible manner.

Map 2: Migrant concentration per census tract, 2011: African countries' nationals in the Municipality of Athens (bottom left) and in the Kypseli/Plateía Amerikís area (top right). Colour gradation signifies African migrants' concentration percentage per city block. Map by the author based on data by the Hellenic Statistics Authority at <http://panoramaps.statistics.gr>

Image 1: Relative location of Plateía Amerikís in the dense Athenian urban fabric. Colour gradation signifies (approximate) intensity of fieldwork undertaken in different neighbourhood parts. Infographic by the author, with aerial photo from Greekscapes.gr (website now defunct, and page is archived at: <https://archive.is/z23eE>).

Other times, we would huddle outside cafes broadcasting football games on wide screens that had been purposefully tilted outwards for the passers-by to have a peek. Out there on the sidewalk, undocumented migrants – many among whom dreamt of a football career in Europe¹ – rooted for their favourite teams and sometimes rubbed shoulders, or shared the grief of a missed chance to score with passing police officers who would briefly pause their patrol to catch a glimpse of the game – the very same policemen who would have stopped them down the street and ask for their papers on any other occasion. Yet, for a short time, this contentious dynamic was suspended. The boundary between the migrants and the police officers eroded, even if momentarily, under the soft power politics of sport. We would often give up around half-time, however. Winter evenings

¹ Young African men's aspirations for a football career in the European leagues has been often documented by previous research as a strong migratory motivation (see, for example: Poli, 2006; Schapendonk, 2009; Suter, 2012; Fait, 2013).

Image 2: Watching the finals of the Africa Cup of Nations on a tablet outside Baita Mini Market at Plateía Amerikís. Image: © Louis Konstantinou (2013) during a mutual visit to Plateía Amerikís.

descend with dry sharp cold spells in Athens. We needed to keep our limbs warm and so we would wander off and talk in the meandering, graffiti- and trash littered streets for hours.

On most days, we would walk into one small ethnic shop or another: Baita Mini Market², Afrika Food, Fatty's, Arpa, where the air sat heavy and still, loaded with the chatter of satellite TV and heated discussions in dialects. I would shuffle my feet between cardboard boxes and open sacks laid out neatly on the floor and walk among shelves overflowing with presumably edible goods for which I had no name nor flavour association yet. The sweet and pungent smells of palm oil, dried crayfish, ground exotic seeds, leaves and seasonings hitting my nostrils, tingling my taste buds, sinking down to my gut. I was not looking for borders still, despite drawing ever closer to them. I was only picking ingredients for West African recipes I

² See Image 2 above.

Image 3: Murphy at the entrance of the basement apartment he shared with a group of Congolese and Angolan migrants. Image by the author (2014).

found online, planning to cook dinner with the people I spent time with, and I watched as people watched me – intrigued by my presence in places I was not expected to be, as much as I was by theirs.

Food, then, had to be prepared and consumed ‘at home’, and this was how the principal border was crossed: when for the first time I was invited to step over the threshold between public space and private – from the street level into the orderly but dilapidated apartments that only euphemistically could be called ‘homes’³. An imperceptible borderline stretched taut across the doorsteps of damp, derelict buildings that stacked dingy apartments, where people were charged five euros a head per day to sleep on a mangy mattress on the floor with ten other strangers also in search of an escape route out of Greece, day in and day out. Gently, but firmly, I had been

³ See Images 3, 4, and 5.

Image 4: Exterior view of the dilapidated 'Prosfygika' housing project on Alexandras Avenue in Athens, built in the mid-1930s to house Greek refugees expelled from Asia Minor in the Great Population Exchange of 1923 between Greece and Turkey. Today it is occupied by residents from all walks of life, mostly migrants and refugees. Research participants from Iran and Afghanistan lived there. Image by the author (2014).

diverted from crossing it by my newfound acquaintances, until sufficient rapport and trust were established between us over time and I was, eventually, granted reluctant passage.

Most of my local acquaintances were men, who would readily admit that they couldn't really cook, or that they didn't wish to prepare anything complex themselves. They would resort, thus, to 'white food'⁴ during their journey. Food preparation was a task reserved

⁴ Based on fieldwork observations, 'white food' in this context had a dual meaning. It signified both food that is white as in plain/bland/starchy (such as rice, potatoes or white bread), as well as food meant for 'white people' and was, therefore, considered to be culturally and corporally unfamiliar, and even detrimental, to them as it could not provide proper physical and, most importantly, spiritual nourishment.

Image 5: Exterior view of the dilapidated 'Prosfygika' housing project. The text in Dari on the wall reads: 'My life has been ruined; Gone past my dreams; Oh god! Regret my flight to Greece; Because I thought I would find (peace); My comrades are my enemies now; Help me.' Image by the author (2014).

for the women in their families, so most of them had likely never faced the task of preparing their own meals prior to migrating. A few times per week, therefore, I would slip into a familiar, gendered role and offer to cook West African dishes lifted from YouTube on gas canister stoves at their places, often in the feeble glow of halved beeswax candles whose flicker was the only source of light in these apartments – where not only electricity and phone, but even water had often been disconnected.

The candles were rationed out by the frowning warden of the nearby Christian Orthodox church of Aghios Andreas, on Lefkosias street. Each afternoon the same choreography unfolded by the church's entrance in an effort to coax the warden's donation: The right hand of the (usually Muslim) migrants pointing at the stacks of thin brown votive candles by the entrance, while their left one hastily went

through the motions of a much-practiced, but still wrongly-sequenced and executed, ‘first-three-fingers-of-the-right-hand-pressed-together’ orthodox sign of the cross. At home, each candle would be snapped in two – one part would stay perched on the kitchen’s window sill with me, while the other half was propped in the center of the circle of men sitting and chatting in the next room.

Food was served in large communal bowls on low tables or on newspapers spread on the floor⁵. As we would squat down in a circle around the common dish, our bodies would come closer. As fingers dipped into the soft cassava dough, lips smacked, eyes closed resting in their sockets for a second, I counted our flickering shadows on the walls: I couldn’t tell mine from theirs. In the half-light, Daniel, a broad-framed Ghanaian from Accra who wished to one day join his sister’s family in London, would sometimes take my hand in his and vigorously rub its back with his index finger, pretending to scrub the skin colour off of it. He then exclaimed loudly with a smile full of teeth: *‘Aaah! Joanna! Aaah! You’re not white, Joanna, I swear! You’re black under your skin. You are, I’m telling you! Aiii!’* – presumably praising the resemblance of my cooking and table manners to what he was culturally familiar with.

It was during one of those times that I first came to realise how another primordial boundary, that of my physical skin and its pigmentation was arbitrary and relative. This was something that I kept being reminded of in the years to come, often harshly, ‘in the field’. Something as taken for granted as one’s skin colour could turn out to be socially constructed and spatially determined: not just an indisputable product of genetics, or of seasonal sun exposure, but a variable outcome of a host of relational factors. I was neither white, nor black. I could be either, both, or none: a product of kaleidoscopic decoding and interpretation of the social-environmental information my body’s surface encoded and transmitted to its various onlookers. Over the span of a few months, I had successively turned ‘black’ through my cooking skills; I had been lamented as a ‘white’ who would never understand a migrant’s struggles by the sceptical

⁵ See, for example, Image 7 on p. 81.

among them; I had been called ‘black’ derogatorily by Greeks for merely standing outside an African hair salon; to be then cast again into a shade of ‘whiteness’ that should preclude me from hearing someone’s ‘true’ lifestory; and I overheard being described as ‘mulata/brown’ (*mavrideri*) by a train conductor for simply sitting in the last car of the Athens-Thessaloniki overnight train, which is informally reserved for travelling ‘undesirables’ by ticket booking staff.

And all the while I was affected by experiences and emotions of unprecedented intensity, volume and variety. The soreness in my body from keeping at migrants’ heels all day, as they kept moving on foot to avoid attracting attention for being at the same spot for too long. The lung-contracting stench and lack of fresh air in the boarded-up buildings where the men who collected recyclable materials from street dumpsters would live: doors and windows remained tightly shut to protect from prying eyes and thieves as they stayed inside all day sorting trash and stripping cables off their plastic casing and only came out at night pushing their supermarket carts for fear of harassment. And yet, despite all that, their vehement refusal to feel pitied. The gut-wrenching anxiety of seeing police lining the street you’re walking down, officers grabbing the darkest of passers-by and shoving them into police vans. Coming together for modest, but heartfelt Iftar festivities to celebrate the end of Ramadan. For a traditional Ethiopian wedding of a young couple that had met on the way to Greece. For the birth of someone’s child back home. Observing the various expressions of migrants’ mystifying and unwavering faith in a complex, interfaith Divine – traditional religions’ spirits and faith in the supernatural, blended with Christian symbolisms and weaved into Islam – to hedge against migration risks. Having my open-sandaled toes slosh in the blood that gushed from Badara’s gaping head⁶, that was smashed with a metal rod by a group of nationalist vigilantes. The ecstatic voices at the other end of the line, from Paris, from Amsterdam, from Berlin: *‘I made it, Joanna, I made it! Thank God! I’m here!’*. The looks and questions I would get from people in ‘my part’ of town, who could not understand this ‘absurd past-time’ of mine: ‘Hanging out with the immigrants? Eating out of

⁶ See Image 6 on the following page.

Image 6: Talking to the police while Badara lays on the ground bleeding from a head wound. Image: © Louis Konstantinou (2013) during a mutual visit to Plateía Amerikís.

the same plates? Make sure you catch a disease, or something, will you?’.

It was not until I unintentionally stumbled upon what emerged as an almost impenetrable border wall running across the fading traffic lines of Patission avenue in central Athens⁷, that I was forced to confront the splintering experience of urban space between those considered as legitimate city dwellers and the ranks of urban undesirables. On that catalytic encounter, the infravisible nature of urban borders was revealed: they appeared as demarcation lines often connected to a city’s infrastructure and materiality, whose exact location and resulting spatialities were detectable only by some, while remaining invisible to others. Different categories of urban dwellers were, therefore, granted different mobility patterns based on their context-specific reading of the socio-spatial codes embedded in the

⁷ The incident is described in detail in the section ‘Invisible borders: manoeuvring the city’ in this dissertation’s first publication: ‘African border crossings in a ‘city of Others’: Undocumented African border-crossings in Athens’ (p.158, article’s internal page numbering).

cityscape. Where a ‘citizen’ would just walk down the street, an ‘illegal migrant’ would have to improvise a zig-zag path across the back streets of several blocks. Ignorance or defiance of those codes could bring about differential consequences, too: spontaneously crossing a street could result into a jaywalking warning for a citizen, at worst, while the very same act could lead to an undocumented migrant’s indefinite imprisonment and potential deportation. Contrasting affects and uneven effects were, thereby, afforded upon different bodies based on their capacity to sense, interpret, navigate and negotiate space and its partitioning at the urban scale, and beyond.

When I first visited Kypseli, however, the extent to which these processes ruled over the daily lives of the people who were deemed ‘extraneous’ to the body politic and were thus relegated to the margins of its geography and sociality – undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and other urban outcasts – was both unclear to me, and beyond the scope of my initial inquiry. However, as my participants mediated and interpreted their experience of urban borders another perspective of the city started to gradually materialise. This angle had remained imperceptible to my privileged perspective until then: checkpoints, blockades and boundaries forcefully emerged and striated urban space where only smooth surfaces appeared to be before.

Those limits and confines were added onto the ones which already marked the physical and discursive crisis-scape of Athens in 2012 and 2013: a city marred by the early tremors of austerity, social deregulation, and the terrifying mainstreaming of far-right discourse, both within the Greek parliament and across the public sphere. By day, Athenian streets were barricaded with police vans and armed officers who carried out the brutally implemented, massive-scale ‘sweep’ operation ‘Xenios Dias’ (Hospitable Zeus) against ‘illegal migrants’ based on blatant ethnic and racial profiling⁸. By night,

⁸ On the background of the operation ‘Xenios Dias’, which – ironically enough – stands for one of the mythical god’s many names that means ‘Hospitable Zeus’, see Dalakoglou (2013, p. 516), Cheliotis (2013, pp. 728–729) and Voutira (2016).

they were patrolled by ‘stormtrooper’ paramilitary squads connected to the ultranationalist party Golden Dawn⁹, to be then taken over by demonstrations every other day that left them lined with trashcans and cars set ablaze in their aftermath. As such, a labyrinthine pattern of borderlines emerged and cut across the ragged urban fabric of Athens¹⁰ (Dalakoglou, 2013; Brekke *et al.*, 2014).

During those days the doctrine of ‘making migrants’ lives unlivable’ prevailed and laid out the ideological foundations of the political/executive response towards migration and border controls for the years to come. Official statements such as the following are indicative of these attitudes, while demonstrating the application of affective counter-incentives in the implementation of migration politics:

This is why we must make their lives unlivable [*Gr: πρέπει να τους κάνουμε το βίο αβίωτο*]. So, they will know that when they will come to this country they will stay in here, they will not get out [...] Otherwise we’re not doing anything.

— Nikos Papagiannopoulos, Chief of the Hellenic Police Force, 2013 (Vaxevanis, 2013)

They have to understand they are not welcome in Greece. They have to understand that they will have to leave this country. One of the ways to convince them that they are unwelcome is to arrest them frequently. We should make their lives as hard as we can [...] If they are made to walk all the way from Anavissos back to Athens around fifteen times, maybe they will finally consider taking the [repatriation incentive] money we offer, board a plane and go back to their country.

— Adonis Georgiadis, Minister of Health, 2013 (Koumiotis, 2013)

⁹ For the activity of Golden Dawn in the center of Athens, particularly referring to the action of vigilante groups, see Psara and Mpintelas (2013) and Tsaldaris (2013).

¹⁰ For the author’s overview of the multifaceted crisis that Greek society underwent during that period, and its sociospatial effects, see Tsoni (2012).

Border security cannot exist without losses and, to be clear, if there are no deaths. Border security requires dead [people] [...] When you will be here, not only you will not have social provisions, but you will not be able to eat, you will not be able to drink, you will not be able to go to the hospital and you will say to the others back in Pakistan that ‘here we are having a worse time than in Pakistan’. [...] Hell should seem like paradise compared to what they will be going through here.

— Thanos Plevris, Popular Orthodox Rally (LA.O.S.)
Member of Parliament, 2011 (Plevris, 2011)

Those physical and discursive demarcation lines, and the affects they aroused, were neither spatially nor temporally confined within the metropolitan/national territory of Greece. Through the testimonies collected for this research, their effects could be traced both forwards and backwards in time and space, linking bordering processes at the urban scale with national borders crossed by migrants long ago, and others that were yet to come. Places like Lesbos, Pátras, Thessaloniki and Izmir, as well as various European capitals were only a few among the locations pulled into the scope of this research through migrants’ narratives, forming an extended landscape, which gradually got populated by an assemblage of border actors, both human and non-human as this inquiry progressed.

The following years were spent tracking the entanglement of those shifting border geographies and materialities with the border actors’ patterns of mobility and stasis. I, too, was forced to move partly due to the mobility of my informants, and partly due to the flow of information: moving with- and after stories in search of meaning and understanding. The identification and deciphering of those processes took place not only through the detection of borders’ spatial manifestations, but also through the exploration of the affective impressions and somatic responses – both my own and those of others – to various events. These were collected through migrants’ narratives or through the observation of their first-hand experiences, supplemented with the accounts and practices of various other borderlanders, including the researcher herself, whose paths and projects crossed with those of the migrants.

Gradually, the conceptualisation of these landscapes as ‘affective borderscapes’ emerged. They comprised of a multitude of mobile, or sedentary, parts: human, material, spatial, historical, political, cultural, and legal contexts and infrastructures, which interfolded around actual and symbolic thresholds often found far from the edges and the official entry points of nation-states. In this context, borders are not perceived as static entities but as interacting assemblages of embodied, emplaced and senseable practices between actors within the southeastern Mediterranean borderscape, of which the Aegean region is a part.

This brief retrospect of how a relatively unproblematic quest on migrant food geography evolved into a project on the affects and effects of bordering that will be detailed in this thesis is an indispensable part of its telling. Firstly, such an account outlines how a participant-driven research orientation emerged, based on the everyday urgencies faced by the participants themselves. It is also indicative of those occasions when the reality in the field may supersede the researcher’s preconceived research plans, which, if they would have been followed through would have had only limited relevance to the life circumstances of the people and communities in question.

Secondly, this review registers a range of standpoints and movements. It reflexively exposes the researcher’s initial positionality and potential blind spots, and their gradual adaptation based on the conditions encountered on the ground. This is important not because I have a penchant for autobiographical narrative, crucial as it nonetheless is for the production of knowledge, but because this research and its interpretive-hermeneutic approach are significantly affected by who I am and what my standpoint is, two questions which necessitate upfront consideration and discussion as ‘the standpoint that is beyond any standpoint [...] is pure illusion’ as Gadamer asserts (2004, p. 369).

This registration of movements includes not only those of the researched, but also those of the researcher, and of the research itself, both through space and time. This study unfolded between 2012 and 2019, throughout several countries and across innumerable borders

and boundaries. As stated at the very beginning, little, if anything remains of those times: By the spring of 2013 most of the people I had been in contact with in Kypséli had sneaked their way out of Greece with the help of human smugglers, or counting on their own resourcefulness. Oumar was in Brussels, Abdulai was placed with a foster family in Germany, Marck was in a prison in Belgrade, Dura and his cousin Sam were in a minor's shelter in Munich. Murphy now played football for a team in Nancy. Daniel had died and his body laid unclaimed in a morgue in Athens, too expensive to repatriate to Ghana. Many others had disappeared in the thick Balkan forests, fallen prey to local gangs or treacherous nature while attempting to figure out the footpath to Europe in an almost self-sacrificial manner – the selfsame path which later came to be known as the 'Balkan Road'. I had moved and lived in Sweden by then, having secured a Ph.D. position, a narrow escape from the grim predicament of unemployment and socioeconomic lock-in in crisis-ridden Greece. Still, I often travelled back to Athens and other European cities to catch up with the fading friendships formed during those early days and see this project through.

Lastly, yet perhaps most importantly, another movement suggested through this section's confessional tone is the move from an initial position of relative intellectual confidence at the onset of this research to a more modest stance at its closing moment, when, paraphrasing Donald Rumsfeld's dictum¹¹, the understanding has finally sunken in that the 'unknown unknowns' will always outnumber any 'known knowns' and 'known unknowns' I might have gathered in this process. In addition to that, despite the inevitable periodicism of a piece of work whose making has spanned seven years, one of the core intentions of this work is to preserve the concerns, values and experiences of specific people, places and times and make them perceptible and relatable to present and future readers, as well as to those who have participated in its making, and others in their shoes.

¹¹ 'There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. These are things we do not know we don't know.' Donald Rumsfeld, Former United States Secretary of Defense, 2002.

To conclude, throughout centuries, Europe's southeastern borders have oscillated between being frontiers of exclusion and inclusion, melting pots of often divisive heritages, and shifting bulwarks against differentially defined 'otherness' (Delanty, 1996, 2007), similarly to how their urban counterparts nowadays function, too. Although borders and boundaries have periodically gained and lost their saliency they have diachronically remained formative components of European self-identity and its constructions of belonging and non-belonging (Delanty, 2006) affecting millions. Recounting these volatile processes and their reverberations upon places and people along the continents' margins in a meaningful manner without giving in to a desire to shock or victimise has been both the challenge and burden of this work.

2. INTRODUCTION

Framing the research

In the wake of a sociopolitically volatile era that is increasingly characterized by the intensive and extensive proliferation of borders (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2008), the southeastern Mediterranean region, particularly the extended area along the Greek-Turkish borders, serves as a paradigmatic site for the study of emerging configurations of contemporary border regimes (Ribas-Mateos, 2017). The easternmost basin of the Mediterranean Sea, which has historically brought cultures and civilizations together, is a region of deep diachronic symbolisms, where Europe, Asia and Africa meet, merge and push against each other, and where today's West confronts its East and South (Bechev and Nikolaidis, 2010; Boria and Dell'Agnese, 2012).

Land- and sea-scapes of the past, which had been previously experienced as flexible and fluid (although not non-contentious) contact spaces have been overwhelmingly affected by bordering processes often drafted and executed from afar, within a globalised and outsourced regime of externalised border controls and remote surveillance (Zolberg, 2003; Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2009, p. 728; Guild and Bigo, 2010, p. 258). This region of cultural convergence and contestation, of ceaseless mobility, reciprocal influences and diverse identities that flourished through travel and trade has nowadays been turned into a liquid stretch united and lacerated by disquiet and death (Pèrcopo, 2011; Boria and Dell'Agnese, 2012; Tazzioli, 2015; Albahari, 2016). New border configurations have emerged, materialising a succession of festered and fresh territorial traumas that have erupted along the shores and hinterlands of this 'liquid continent' (Purcell and Horden, 2000, 2003) in the wake of

‘Arab Springs’¹² and ‘Desert Storms’¹³, and the rapid succession of ‘Shields’, ‘Sabers’, ‘Farewells’ and ‘Shares’, all made with ‘Inherent Resolve’¹⁴ in the name of ‘Infinite Justice’¹⁵ and ‘Enduring Freedom’¹⁶. Such changes have irreversibly affected the local topography and have recasted and partitioned the sociality and mobility of permanent and itinerant communities in the region.

Although the ethnographic site of this research is set across the extended region on both sides of the Greek-Turkish border, this territory and the processes that transpire within it are not incomparable to bordering logics and practices actualised elsewhere in the world. The local landscapes of exclusion unfold into a fluctuating, yet solid, web of physical, discursive, cognitive and affective lines of differentiation and control that span scales from the global to the local, down to lines of distinction inscribed upon people’s bodies.

Both migration and bordering are inherently spatial and relational processes, expressed and mediated through the movement or stasis

¹² The Arab Spring was a series of a loosely-related pro-democracy uprisings, protests and armed rebellions initiated in 2010-11 that enveloped several predominantly Muslim countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain. The consequences of these events have varied greatly across the countries involved and the region in general, from ousting of oppressive regimes to increasing sectarianism, ongoing conflicts, ferociously waged civil wars and an escalating refugee crisis (Garelli and Tazzioli, 2013; Tazzioli, 2013; Mittermaier, 2017).

¹³ ‘Operation Desert Shield’ (2 August 1990 – 17 January 1991) has been the U.S. Government name for the troop deployment phase of the Gulf war. The word ‘desert’ then bloomed and multiplied for the ensuing war’s subsequent phases: Desert Storm: combat (17 January – 28 February 1991); Desert Saber: ground offensive (24 – 28 February 1991); Desert Farewell: troop redeployment; and Desert Share: distribution of surplus food provisions earmarked for war to the North American poor (Suleiman, 2011, p. 221; Spradley and McCurdy, 2012, p. 59).

¹⁴ ‘Operation Inherent Resolve’ was the U.S. military’s operational name for the military intervention initiated on 15 June 2014 against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, including both the campaign in Iraq and the campaign in Syria (McInnis, 2016).

¹⁵ ‘Operation Infinite Justice’ was the short-lived name of the U.S. military for the so-called Global War on Terrorism in response to the September 11 attacks. The origins of the name can be traced back to the 1998 ‘Operation Infinite Reach’ airstrikes against Osama bin Laden’s facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan in response to the bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. ‘Operation Infinite Justice’ was renamed on 25 September 2001 to ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ due to its offensive connotations, so that both Americans and Muslims would not be disturbed by a war pictured as expanding to infinity, and a military operation invoking attributes of God to justify incursions (Weeden, 2004, p. 3; Shalom, 2009).

¹⁶ ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ was initiated on 7 October 2001, when the United States and its British ally launched their attack on Taliban and al-Qaeda targets in Afghanistan. Previously named ‘Operation Infinite Justice’, the term primarily refers to the War in Afghanistan, but it is nowadays also affiliated with operations elsewhere in the world (Shalom, 2009).

of human and non-human actors in space, while at the same time having deeply affective and emotional drivers and embodied consequences (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015; Carling and Collins, 2018), which, however, are often overlooked in research. Among the other aspects they encompass, these reconfigured Mediterranean lands and waters constitute affective terrains for the populations that inhabit or traverse them, as it will be further elucidated in the chapters and publications that follow. While only briefly touching upon the notion of affect at this point, it is important to note that this affectivity includes, yet exceeds, ordinary perceptions of sensations and feelings regarding the form or function of particular locations. It incorporates a relational configuration of the motions, emotions, sensibilities and perceptions that are transmitted between animate and inanimate bodies that inhabit certain spaces or move through them. It is the merging of such ‘forces, energies and affective potentialities of human beings, with their natural, built and material environment’ (Navaro-Yashin, 2012, p. 27) that gives rise to the affective border geographies and the amalgam of the elements that constitute them, which lie at the at the core of this research.

This thesis approaches the unfolding of historical contingencies, such as mass migration and the restructuring of bordering practices in the region, from the perspectives of affective geography (Navaro-Yashin, 2012), migrant liminality (Mountz et al., 2002; Menjivar, 2006; Riggs, 2006; Sutton, Wels and Vigneswaran, 2011) and critical mobility (Jensen, 2009; Sheller, 2011). It aims to explore how borders are perceived, experienced, incorporated and contested in affective relationality (Brennan, 2004) between borderlanders – both people on the move and the populations they encounter on their way – as well as their environments. In doing so, it addresses the paucity of research on affective border geographies and suggests nuanced ways of perceiving the southeastern Mediterranean space, its people, and the powers and processes at play within it through a renewed conceptualisation of borderscapes (Perera, 2007; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2007a; Brambilla, 2015a; Brambilla *et al.*, 2015) as spaces impacted by the generation and transmission of affect.

In part, this an archaeological endeavour: only fragments of the events witnessed during the extended fieldwork period have made it to these pages intact. The rest lies in the compost of memory or remains partly hidden between the folds and layers of the borderland landscapes they transpired within: traces from the lives of people and places most of us never see, never think about, hardly even know exist. On the other hand, geography's capacity to draw upon and combine the diverse dynamics between sites, bodies, materialities and practices at multiple scales firmly underpins this pursuit. An archaeogeographic inquiry is, therefore, formulated. This approach seeks to salvage and synthesize impressions and affects gathered along the numerous borders that cut through bustling cities and the seascapes of quaint fishing villages alike; borders destined to lose currency and dissipate after the current affairs' brief attention span shifts, only to coalesce and re-emerge elsewhere soon after: from Melilla to Calais, from Lampedusa to Lesvos, from Idoméni to Öresund; borders embedded, experienced and carried within bodies, affecting them as much as being affected by them.

Affect is a particularly elusive concept to research, despite the recent 'affective turn' in the humanities and social sciences (Ticineto-Clough and Halley, 2007), and the ensuing virtual explosion of research and theoretical writing on the topic (Barrett, 2010, p. 203). In studies focusing on the empirical research of affective processes, such as the present one, this pursuit can be especially challenging (Knudsen and Stage, 2015b) since 'the solidity of the subject has dissolved into a concern with those processes, practices, sensations and affects that move through bodies in ways that are difficult to see, understand and investigate', as Blackman (2012, p. viiii) notes. Thus, a reorientation towards fieldwork is required so that 'data of a more embodied kind' (Walkerdine, 2010, p. 92) can be collected. In this study, therefore, a variety of ethnographic and affectively-attuned methodologies were used to collect data embodied by the research participants and by the author, and to empirically trace the affective atmospheres resulting from human and non-human bodies' encounters with borders, as it will be explained in Chapter four.

Apart from the spatiotemporal dynamics of borders, their material and human morphology has also been central to this research. This study is comprised by the written and oral accounts, as well as by the tangible traces of many individuals, most of whom are often presumed as faceless, nameless beings – depersonalized specks among the so-called ‘migrant masses’. And yet, despite being confronted with the debilitating, Janus-faced reality of our ‘borderless’ world – the desire and fear that perfuse the simultaneous longing to be free and the yearning to be b/orderd (van Houtum, 2010) and the eventual denial of both – each one of those homogenised individuals has been persistently reclaiming their agency, identity and personhood, and sought meaning, belonging and connection within liminal environments and conditions.

Aside from migrants, however, the perspectives of a host of other actors have also informed this work. Individuals or groups whose presence and activity are often considered entirely unrelated to migrants’ social spheres, or strictly antagonistic to them – resulting in their interactions remaining, therefore, largely unaccounted for – have emerged as organic and polysemous parts of migrant life-worlds. During my fieldwork, the voices of coastguard and policemen, local communities, humanitarian activists and human smugglers, among others, had been resonating. Insights informed by their narratives have been included in this research supplementing the migrants’ perspectives and revealing the various ways in which their experiences of- and at borders intertwine and coaffect.

To capture the variety of processes and practices at play within the border landscape a phenomenologically-informed ethnographic methodology was formulated and refined iteratively based on the challenges encountered in the field. Consequently, research requirements resulted in a multi-sited inquiry and a mixed-method experience-based approach to data collection. Extensive participant observation from multiple positionings played a key role, as it allowed for meaningful interactions with the people and spaces encountered, while also enabling reflexive understandings of the events experienced by the research participants. A large number of oral, as well as partici-

pant-authored life-narratives supplemented field observations, together with in-depth unstructured interviews, and a variety of mobile, creative and visual methods, such as photography, mapping, drawing and video-making.

The empirical material has captured different stages of undocumented migrants' journeys and recounted how, long before being trespassed by irregular border-crossers, Europe's recently hyperactivated southern frontiers unfolded into a fluctuating, yet solidly emplaced, web of physical, symbolic and cognitive lines of differentiation drawn along dispersed nodes of surveillance and control which are set forth by European Union (hereafter EU) politics. To respond to the multidimensional bordering processes that emerged through the affectively-attuned fieldwork, the research scope was adapted to include the multiple sites, spatial scales and points in time upon which irregular border-crossers and other borderlanders encountered frontiers. Past and present events from distant locations that spanned scales from the (inter)national, local and urban level, down to the bodily one were subsequently encompassed.

A succession of border-minefields (both metaphorical and quite literal¹⁷) was gradually revealed: they erupted as people moved from the European continent's geographical peripheries towards the core of a national (Greece) and a supranational (EU) entity. Firstly, along the liquid, semi-militarized political borders, such as those just off Lesbos island, where the much-fraught national (Greek-Turkish) and supranational (external EU) borders coincide. Secondly, across the supposedly effaced 'soft' intra-EU borders, whose reanimation and consolidation may have preceded the advent of the refugee 'crisis' of 2015 but were accelerated at a pace- and with such a steadfast sociopolitical resolve that would have previously been inconceivable

¹⁷ Minefields have been scattered since 1974 along the Greek-Turkish border across the Évros river. Those have not yet been removed in accordance with the country's international treaty obligations. Between 1980 and 2011 at least 250 people have been reported to have lost their lives by landmines in that area, mostly while trying to make their way across the border in unknown terrains (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002, 2006; Polychronidis *et al.*, 2006). In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as IRIN News reports, parts of Una-Sana Canton (the border area with Croatia where most migrants have been bottlenecked in their effort to reach northern Europe) are still riddled with landmines from the 1990s civil war (2018).

within the integrationist context of ‘an ever closer union among the peoples and Member States of the European Community’ (European Council, 1983, p. 25). On yet another scale, the shifting urban borderlands of major metropolises of migrant settlement and transit, such as Athens, posed a challenging and almost indecipherable border landscape for the newly arrived. Lastly, borders were tracked down onto ‘the geography closest-in’ (Rich, 1986, p. 19) of the embodied, mental and physical lines of distinction that are frequently drawn between local and migrants.

The conceptual keystone of this research is set by the borderscape notion. Within the context of multiscalar affective border geographies the borderscape perspective foregrounds a relational, processual and dialogic understanding of borders as mobile spaces that extend beyond the imaginary of the line and consist of performative, participatory and senseable dimensions of bordering processes (Perera, 2007; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2007a; Brambilla, 2015a; Brambilla *et al.*, 2015).

The interdisciplinary field of International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER), within which this dissertation is situated, provides an ideal foundation from which to approach the elusive concept of border affects. Although IMER studies is primarily concerned with documenting specific instantiations of issues pertaining to migration, mobilities and social diversity, the field’s inherent multidisciplinary invites contributions from several larger disciplines, yielding new and critical insights to social sciences. These contributions that are integral to the field of IMER, and which speak directly to my topic of investigation, span questions on politics and governance; the processes and effects of global versus local dynamics; issues of social inequality; challenges regarding citizenship and belonging; the kaleidoscopic human geography of borders and boundaries; and emergent forms of urbanity, from both a contemporary and a historical perspective. To those, I add a concernment with the politics of affect, and proceed to engage critically with it, through the analysis of the rich empirical material of this study. Each component of this theoretical and methodological assemblage offers a partial vantage point into the experiences and im/mobilities of the people who

have been intent on dwelling in, defining or defending the borders that irregular border-crossers defy, while they all engage in the ceaseless construction, enactment and contestation of borders ‘from below’.

Research aims and objectives

This research focusses on the emerging configurations of border effects and affects across the southeastern Mediterranean region, and the extended area of the Aegean borderscape in particular, in times of major economic, social and geopolitical upheaval. This perspective remains under-researched despite its heightened importance, given the concurrent developments in theory and practice since the 1990s, namely the spatial- affective- and mobilities ‘turns’ in the humanities and social sciences (Soja, 1989; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Ticineto-Clough and Halley, 2007), as well as the gradual culmination of the European migration and border policies into the current humanitarian crisis at the continent’s southern doorstep.

This work draws upon various sources, such as extensive ethnographic research, key academic literature, mediated representations and contemporary debates and discourses on questions of bordering and migration. In doing so, it seeks to make a constructive theoretical contribution to the research fields of border and migration studies which, similarly to the case made for anthropology by Desjarlais, are ‘in dire need of theoretical frames that link the phenomenal and the political... especially [studies] that convincingly link modalities of sensation, perception and subjectivity to pervasive political arrangements’ (Desjarlais, 1997, p. 25).

The aim of this study is to ethnographically explore and describe the role of affect in bordering processes within the southeastern Mediterranean borderscape and develop the concept of affective borderscapes as a theoretical contribution to the field of border studies.

To address the overarching research aim, the following interlinked objectives are formulated to guide the in-depth exploration of borders’ affective aspects:

- To ethnographically explore the sociospatial and material composition of the southeastern Mediterranean borderscape;
- To collect and combine a variety of narratives around borders as experienced by migrants as well as other border actors in various locations;
- To capture and illustrate the sensory and affective facets of bordering within this landscape;
- To detect borders' urban emergence;
- To inquire into borders' embodiment and materiality;
- To describe the southeastern Mediterranean borderscape's affective topography.

Problem statement and research question

Although western administrative apparatuses are often considered to be utterly rational and dispassionate entities (Navaro-Yashin, 2007, p. 83), the governance of borders and belonging, both across Europe and beyond, is nowadays increasingly taking place through the instrumental top-down exertion of affective and biopolitical power¹⁸ upon individuals and collectives. At the same time, although suppressed, compliance to- or contestation of these forces transpires from below through the transgressive and affectively-driven human mobilities, and a range of mobilisations, which stand for- or against them. Yet, the role of affective practices, as a range of human activity where emotions and affect are the principal focus of the practice (Wetherell, 2013; Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, 2018), visceral experiences, and their effects in the modulation of this 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' borderwork (Rumford, 2008) is downplayed and overlooked in a lot of the mainstream discourse, while remaining academically under-researched (Vukov, 2003; Richard and Rydnyckyj, 2009; Laszczkowski and Reeves, 2015).

¹⁸ According to the work of Foucault (1978, p. 141; 2008), biopolitical power results from the interplay of technologies of discipline and regulation, and targets living subjects' organic biology as a means of controlling and subjugating a population. Examples of the use of biopower upon refugees and host populations alike in the context of Mediterranean irregular migration are offered in the work of Garelli and Tazzioli (2018), Squire (2016) and Little and Vaughan-Williams (2017), among others.

To partly address this oversight in the European context, this thesis aspires to make an impactful contribution to the fields of border and migration studies, through its empirical scope, its methodological choices and its theoretical output. As a multi-sited and multivocal ethnography it aims to encompass insights from a broad range of borderlands and borderlanders, to closely portray them and raise awareness not only *about* them, but also *among* them throughout this endeavour.

I suggest that approaching localized bordering processes, and the landscapes within which they transpire, from an angle that accounts for their affective dimensions can offer complementary perspectives to the workings of the globalised border regime in the southeastern Mediterranean. By focusing on the exploration of internalised, embodied, mobile and ‘moving’ aspects of bordering, this research also contributes a less familiar vantage point onto the research context, as it goes against the current of the ‘territorial trap’ (Agnew, 1994; Reid-Henry, 2010) and the ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002; Chernilo, 2006) that often insidiously seep in border and migration research.

Additionally, this thesis’ capstone theoretical contribution – the concept of affective borderscapes – is significant not just regarding its capacity to acquire and mobilise knowledge and indicate directions for more cutting-edge research, but also for policy and practice: from the design and application of human-centered border and migration policies, to the planning and approach of related services and advocacy initiatives.

To attain support for these statements, the thesis brings together a range of cognate scholarship, mainly drawing on the study of borders/borderscapes and affective geography, with ethnographic observations and proceeds to ask this overarching research question:

How are affective borderscapes constructed, enacted and contested in the southeastern Mediterranean region through the affective practices of various actors, and how do these processes manifest and link up at multiple scales across space and time?

Research strategy

The present study was carried out in several stages, moving back and forth between its theory formulation and its empirical foundations, true to the abductive approach (Blaikie, 2000, pp. 114–119). This research strategy is indicated when ‘the potential for complexity is high and the use of open concepts and methods [is] important’ (Freudendal-Pedersen *et al.* 2010). Abduction takes the knowledge of social actors as a starting point, develops a theory and then tests it iteratively by exploring the production, reproduction and interpretation of the phenomenon under study through an analysis of the actors’ own motives, concepts and accounts.

Figure 1: Abductive research process. Diagram adapted by the author from Spens and Kovács (2006, p. 376).

In addition, abduction allows the use of mixed methods for empirical material collection and analysis and is indicated for interpretive approaches to social enquiry (Blaikie, 2007). Abduction also facilitates the production of empirically-based and theoretically-informed accounts through the dialectical movement between theoretical assumptions and empirical findings and the cross-fertilisation it allows between them for the production of new knowledge, as indicated in Figure 1 above.

Thesis roadmap: Chapter overview

This thesis comprises of an introductory capstone section and a compilation of five peer-reviewed publications and one visual project. The capstone section consists of six chapters that lay out the empirical, theoretical and methodological foundations of the published papers, summarise their content and eventually synthesize and discuss their findings.

The opening Prologue chapter offers an immersive introduction to the early stages of this research by familiarizing readers with the sociospatial, political, material and corporeal conditions encountered by irregular migrants upon arrival in Greece, and Athens in particular. Among the rich details of urban life in the margins, the narrative highlights the gradual emergence of borders, both in their urban and in their inter/national manifestations, as a central concern in the lives of migrants, and as a topic for this research.

Chapter two serves as a general introduction to the thesis. It presents and contextualises the research topic, outlines its general argument, briefly describes the key theoretical and methodological points of departure, and introduces the aims, objectives, research problem and guiding question of this study.

Chapter three, reviews and engages with relevant literature and lays out the theoretical framework of the research. Its opening section sets off with a delineation of border(line)s and the metaphors with which they are invested, which shape not just the imaginations but also the actual form of the world we live in. The chapter continues with the main concepts applied throughout the research, which are interwoven so as to conceptualise the notion of affective borderscapes, which in turn aims to advance the understanding of the nature, function and significance of borderscapes as terrains of affective re/production and contestation.

In Chapter four, an overview of the methodology, methods and empirical material collection and analysis processes is offered. The

overarching research philosophy is presented, rooted in a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, which is followed by an ethnographically and phenomenologically-informed methodology. The methods and processes of data collection and analysis are subsequently explained. Emphasis is placed on the challenges and unforeseen complications of doing research in precarious and emotionally challenging contexts, thereby insights on personal reflexivity, positionality and ethics are included, along with the limitations to the interpretation and impact of this research and its findings.

Chapter five, presents an overview of the five publications and the visual project comprising this thesis by providing an extended summary for each of them, highlighting the linkages between them, and identifying their contributions to the research aim and the ways each of them partially addresses the research question.

Chapter six, brings the thesis full circle, synthesizing and discussing the empirical findings. The research question is revisited and addressed. The theoretical and practical implications, overall contributions and significance of this study are also presented, along with its potential applications and limitations.

Appendices with (a) the consent form presented to research participants, (b) this study's main interlocutors along with basic biographical information on them, and (c) the declaration of co-authorship of the collaborative paper are also included.

The five publications of this dissertation and a supplementary essay on the visual project are appended in the closing section of the book.

3. SITUATING, SENSING, AND SCRUTINIZING THE BORDER/SCAPE

Introduction

Following the introductory chapters that contextualised and laid out the groundwork of this research, this chapter proceeds to review and engage relevant scholarship from border and migration studies, as well as related disciplines to construct the dissertation's theoretical framework. Starting with border(line)s as both geometric and metaphorical lines that gradually transform into literal gridlines which impact not just the symbolic and imaginary conceptualisations of our world, but its actual form and function, it then proceeds to address contemporary perspectives on migration, mobile borders and affective flows from a 'Mediterranean point of view'. The main concepts utilised in this study – borders and borderscapes, affect, and liminality – are introduced and interwoven so that this thesis' core notion of affective borderscapes can be elaborated in the following chapters in its localized Mediterranean configuration.

Persistent metaphors, resistant vocabularies and affective governance.

The line is a starting place. A line in writing makes communication possible by inscribing a point of entry within language and thought. In art, the first thing an artist often does when beginning a new work is, again, to draw a single line; same as in architecture, engineering, and design: the practice of drawing lines literally defines the modern world and its cultural practices (Maynard, 2005, pp. 7–18). A line drawn between two points is the first among the five Euclidean geometry postulates: a 'breadthless length' (Golos, 1968, p. 217) drawn between two points within flat space, from which all of geometry results and by extension, the better part of our geographic understanding of the worldly planes we exist and operate within.

A line is an axiomatic, primitive object; a starting point for the inscription of the world's horizontal territorialities, the design of its mechanics, and for the launch of its empirical investigation thereof.

The intersection of such lines within an otherwise abstract space gives rise to a sociospatial grid composed of juxtaposed modules of 'us' and 'them', 'here' and 'there', 'inside' and 'outside'. Those categories, basic as they might appear, have enormous affective and persuasive force, as they mark sites and states of being with- and against one another across time and space. Seemingly harmlessly, those lines articulate with each other to circumscribe and structure the sovereignties, collectivities, communities, nationalities, jurisdictions, societies and political orders that comprise the modern world system. This establishment then appears as naturalized and primordial to its recipients as the very delimitations that had initially shaped it: a fundamental global order staked upon spatial partitioning, an irrefutable *Nomos* of the Earth¹⁹.

It is this 'very simple line, the very simplicity of which works to discourage too much worrying about the discriminations it enacts or the authorizations it enables' (Walker, 2009, p. 225) that I turn to in this research, trying to unpack some of the latent effects and affects of the borderlines it inscribes upon the various bodies and spatial expanses it cuts across. Within border studies and related fields, such as political geography, international relations, migration or security studies, border metaphors have burgeoned in the last decades, propelling relevant theorization and praxis. Accordingly, borders have been described as 'membranes' (Malczynski *et al.*, 2005), prophylactic means against contamination (Inda, 2006; Kasperek, 2010, p. 137), or 'lines in the sand' (Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2009), while they have also been formulated – metaphorically, but also structurally – as fences, walls and trenches around 'fortress' conceptualisations of the global North/West. As Hebdige asserts:

¹⁹ According to the work of Carl Schmitt (2006) the concept of 'nomos' etymologically does not signify 'law' as the homonymous Greek noun, but draws its meaning from the Greek verb 'nemein' (*Gr: νέμειν* = *allot, distribute* (TLJ, 2011) and denotes a system of spatial order defined by the division and distribution of land, as well as the appropriation of its resources.

metaphors never are, never have been, *just* metaphors tacked on as ornamental extras to a substantive core of communicable sense. Metaphors are themselves an essential (if unstable) component of *realpolitik*, acting as focalizing agents capable of drawing together diverse, even antagonistic constituencies (1993, p. 271, emphasis in original).

Figurative language has tremendous virtual power and within the current climate of moral panic surrounding unauthorized cross-border migration the polarising combination of such border metaphors with analogies of migrants as ‘pollutants’, ‘parasites’, or ‘marauders’ who travel in ‘flows’, ‘tidal waves’, ‘streams’, or ‘hordes’, and arrive as ‘natural disasters’, or ‘barbarians at the gate’ (Inda, 2000; Bettini, 2013; Shariatmadari, 2015; Gerner, 2016; Musolff, 2017; Petersson and Kainz, 2017; Dempsey and McDowell, 2019; Pallister-Wilkins, 2019) creates a toxic narrative assemblage that reveals, as much as it simultaneously obscures, certain aspects of the borderwork occurring across territorial borders. This process of invisibilisation along Europe’s southern frontiers in the wake of the 2015 ‘refugee crisis’ is both symbolic and functional. It concerns not only the dismantling and negation of historical pathways of mobility, and of colonialism’s legacy in the area (Danewid, 2017), but also the concealment of the violent and often extralegal measures that EU governments resort to in their ‘war’ against ‘illegal’ immigration (Raeymaekers, 2014).

Such tropes – and their omissions – have the capacity, when mobilized appropriately, to shape and sway the disposition, construction and cohesion of different categories of imagined communities by tapping into deeply embodied, often subconscious, affective and emotional registers. The use of such charged literary devices and figures of speech in media and political discourse brings together a range of practical and intellectual mechanisms that aim at affecting the contact and conduct of local populations vis-à-vis migrants.

On the antipode of sedentary populations’ perceptions and narratives stand radically contrasting cultural traditions, spatial understandings, personal motivations, individual necessities and a host of cosmologies and social ecologies that guide and sustain people on

the move. Within those, as material from this research bears testament to, ‘illegal’ migration is plainly referred to as ‘travelling’, counterfeit passports are merely ‘books’, and those who embark on this journey of their own accord are acclaimed ‘warriors’ and ‘adventurers’. This is not a matter of simple metonymy or lexical poverty – it is a fundamental perceptual, cognitive and psychological divide determined by the differentiation of the cultural, historical, socioeconomic and material conditions that allow some people to stay in their place, while compelling or forcing others to move.

The perpetuation of such ‘philosophicocultural biases’²⁰ (Stoller, 1980, p. 427) does not just exacerbate laypersons’ misconceptions, but often lurks under scholarly inability to perceive something that may lie outside one’s empirical or theoretical frame of reference, but which is taken for granted by their informants. From migration as a rite of passage and a social imperative – or as an inescapable obligation towards one’s family and community; to some cultures’ fundamentally different conceptualisations of space not as sacrosanct and immutable but rather as negotiable and fluid; and from mobility as a prerogative, a lifestyle preference, or a seasonal livelihood necessity; to the treatment of administrative boundaries as diffuse and contestable (Stoller, 1980; Breusers, 1998; Dubois, Michel and Soumille, 2000; Hampshire, 2002; Walther, 2009; Kehinde, 2010), such blind spots kept emerging in the course of this research, too.

When listened closely, those ‘other’ narratives and experiences of borders and mobility exceed the externally-imposed approaches to irregular migration that are often based solely on rational ‘push and pull’ factors, and chains of ‘supply and demand’ (as in, for example, Entorf, 2000; Antonopoulos and Winterdyk, 2006; Valenta, Zuparic-Iljic and Vidovic, 2015). They reveal the wide variety of people’s emotionally-driven incentives to move, often triggered by

²⁰ Stoller (1980, p. 427) uses this term to refer to researchers’ inclination to inadvertently distort data based on their own socialisation and precognition. This automatic conditioning becomes a conceptual/perceptual problem for ethnographic researchers as it may partially – or wholly – conceal innate meanings and perspectives deriving from the research participants’ realities.

the overarching effects of modern media and cultural globalization (Gebrewold, 2007). They also indicate deeply personal and intimate desires, needs and aspirations: to fulfil a dead brother's dream; to reclaim a lover that migrated and disappeared; to make a widowed mother proud; to apply for university after being denied due to visa restrictions; to live in Paris and see '*la lettre A*'²¹ each day.

At the same time, those narratives reject the foreordination of abjection, deprivation and despair upon migrants and refugees by xenophobes and, often, humanitarians alike. Resilience, hope, determination, gratitude for what has already been achieved, indignation to being pitied on, the fostering of friendship and community, and the joyous celebration of communal festivities, among others, were but a few of the 'unanticipated' affects and attitudes witnessed.

Those nuanced aspects of the everyday negotiation of boundaries and belonging are mostly subsumed, however, beneath the monolithic and fear-mongering approach of the European/North-western geopolitical vision of the world, one aspect of which is firmly founded on the affective dimensions of its generalised bio-necro-political border. This conceptualisation is an alliteration of Vaughan-Williams' (2009b, 2009a) notion of 'generalised bio-political border' (defined as an exceptional space where border practices are diffused and routinised, and wherein sovereign power produces the 'bare life' it needs so as to sustain both itself and its notions of sovereign community). My alliteration adds Mbembe's (2003) 'necropolitics' (which posits that it is the establishment of deathzones, rather than international borders, that delimit states' sovereignty) to the initial formulation, which utilises Foucault's 'biopolitics' (2008) (referring to processes targeting the biological bodies of human beings as loci of political strategy through the exertion of centrifugally-oriented, circulating and embodied 'biopower'). The three concepts are intimately connected with the somatic and affective capacities of

²¹ '*La lettre A*' (En: the letter A) in the jargon of some francophone African migrants in Athens signified the Eiffel tower, due the resemblance of their shapes. Oftentimes, saying those words would be accompanied by a hand gesture with the fingertips of both hands touching in an inclined position to form the tower's/letter's top, and the tips of the thumbs forming the letter's horizontal line, which resembles the Eiffel tower's first floor. At the same time, this gesture closely resembled that of praying hands.

human bodies and the mobilities/mobilisations actualised through them. From this perspective, the EU's assertion of sovereignty from its periphery to the centre, through its borders' contemporary politico-legal construction via processes of securitisation (Huysmans, 2000; Buzan and Wæver, 2009), violent control, and the banalisation of non-assistance (Heller and Pezzani, 2016) (which are sustained and perpetuated, partially, through the elicitation and instrumentalization of private and public affects towards irregularly-mobile, emotive bodies) exemplifies the emergence of a decentred border regime operating, among other ways, through the orchestration of affects around singular events and diffused border atmospheres.

Migration struggles, mobile borders and circulating affects: A Mediterranean point of view

To address the topic of this research, close empirical investigation and theorisation of how human affective and sensory registers articulate with borders, migration and displacement is needed; how those micro-level operations are linked to states' performance and instrumentalization of emotions and affects from their social and spatial margins towards their core; and how affects come to be generated and mobilised within/around specific liminal spaces, people, collectivities, material objects, infrastructures, and individual- or state practices.

To comprehend the tensions sustained by national borders, and the eruption of unanticipated demarcation lines within the territories and across the urban centers of nation-states throughout the European continent after the onset of the refugee 'crisis' of 2015, and their expression and materialisation at the urban scale, attention needs to be shifted from the contestations stirred around EU's internal territorial borders – supposed to be largely abolished through the process of European integration – to its peripheral borderlands. The locus of this research is, therefore, set in an area that is presently an ideal location for the study of the evolution of borders and boundaries: the Mediterranean basin – its southeastern shores in particular. This is a crossroad region where multiple and historically variable topographies and mobilities have been registered from an-

tiquity until today, each carrying deep symbolic and affective resonances for local populations. It is important to keep in mind, however, that aside from its positive depictions as an area of cultural convergence, connectivity and economic development the Mediterranean's not-so-distant past reveals its Janus face as an area of primitive accumulation and violent geography whose historiography draws from the embryonic stages of western modernity and colonality, which is being continued by other means nowadays (Saucier and Woods, 2014).

A 'Mediterranean point of view', as put forward in brief by Balibar and DeGenova (Garelli, Sciurba and Tazzioli, 2018), will be thus pursued and expanded on. In their perspective, the Mediterranean of migration is seen as a multifaceted, productive and contested space produced by the struggles of diverse mobile bodies. They suggest that the mobilisation of a Mediterranean viewpoint is, therefore, a challenge of paramount importance, as it may serve as a counterpoint to prevalent Eurocentric imaginaries, and has the potential to destabilise the self-centred referentiality of Europe's political borders.

Elaborating on the notion of a Mediterranean viewpoint, I wish to put forward an integrative approach that goes against the mutually rejectionist attitude that is commonly observed in practice between the northern and southern shores, as well as between its western and eastern territories. This tendency has recently been on the rise, exacerbated by a perception of increasing potential threats and geopolitical flashpoints in the region, resulting in widespread insecurity. Moreover, I wish to underline the capacity of the Mediterranean perspective to include constellations of various viewpoints, mobilities and positionalities, as well as a diverse range of actors, human and non/more-than-human, living and non-living, that come together not just through their struggles but also through their routinised everyday encounters within this polymorphous area. This approach would enable the forefronting of locally-derived histories, meanings, worldviews, and experiences circulating across the Mediterranean waters and lands, among them those pertaining to borders.

Although a broad vantage point is necessitated by the research topic, certain delimitations are necessary to help orient and emplace the analysis: first of all, what the Mediterranean actually is, and up to where does it reach, if we are to undertake its perspective? A second requisite would be to specify why this geospatial positioning is selected, and how it is placed as a counterpoint against other border spatialisations in the area?

Aware of two limitations inherent in the majority of research on borders, namely the ‘territorial trap’ (Agnew, 1994; Reid-Henry, 2010), which takes the nation state’s bounded space as the *a priori* unit of analysis, denying other territorial conceptualisations and analytical possibilities, as well as ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002; Chernilo, 2006), which assumes that ‘the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world’ (*ibid.*, p. 301), we will be treating the Mediterranean basin as a region that spans the national, natural and notional boundaries that striate it, and will be focusing on empirical material collected on the extended landscape on both sides of the much-fraught Greek-Turkish border along its Aegean appendage.

As the northernmost section of the eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean borderspace is and a key site of manifestation of the material and representational (dis)connections between Europe and the lands it banks on. Choosing this geographical perspective to address the issues this research grapples with offers an open-ended and flexible counterpoint to the fixity of Eurocentrism. The Mediterranean is not merely a buffer zone – Europe’s aquatic threshold to Africa – it is a place rife with the production of social relations and contestations, a site of deeply-rooted affective investments, and a terrain of itinerant struggles for the accomplishment of innumerable individual and collective visions and livelihoods.

Today’s Mediterranean itineraries, however, could not have been further from the romanticized notion portrayed by the Homeric waters of Ulysses’ peregrination in this area. Recent developments, have caused profound political, economic and social destabilization across the region, affecting not only the Middle East, the Levant,

Figure 2: Unauthorised Mediterranean arrivals at European borders (sea and land) 1998- 2018. Chart compiled by the author.

Data Sources: Irregular Arrivals

- For the period 2008-2018: European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX), (FRONTEX, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).
- Italy: For the period 1998 – 2007: Fargues (2017, p. 26).
- Malta: For the period 1998 – 2004: Sørensen (2006, pp. 38–39); for the period 2005 – 2007: Fargues (2017, p. 26).
- Greece: For the period 2001 – 2007: Hellenic Coast Guard (2011).
- Cyprus: For the period 1998-2006: Futo and Jandl (2007, p. 14); for 2007: Cyprus Police (2008).
- Spain: For the period 1999-2007: Fargues (2017, p. 26).

Migrant Fatalities:

- For the period 1998 – 2013: (Last *et al.*, 2017) with data from UNITED's (2018) list of documented refugee and migrant deaths.
- For the period 2014 – 2018: IOM Missing Migrants (2019).

and North Africa, but also Europe's southern shores, albeit differentially. Among their other devastating consequences, these events and interventions have affected long-established local patterns of human mobility, both territorial and maritime. Human mobility in the extended Mediterranean and its African- and Middle Eastern vicinity had been historically undertaken mostly in an informal and short-term manner, according to each area's diverse traditions of migration (Hampshire, 2002). These individualised practices, apart from having deep-seated sociocultural foundations (Dougnon, 2013), also ensured local populations' livelihoods and land-use (Breusers, 1998), and maintained ethnic and familial ties and identities that had been severed by arbitrary colonial border demarcations (Flynn, 1997; Kehinde, 2010). These seasonal and circular movements originated from tradition or necessity, and were framed by locally-derived conceptualizations of space as a mobile and fluid terrain of circulation (Walther, 2009), and of borders as bridges instead of barriers: pliant and negotiable entities, which reflected the markedly different cosmologies and spatial philosophies of local populations (Stoller, 1980) set against the Western/Westphalian ideas of space. Under the force of the long-lasting and multi-pronged political, economic and environmental regional turmoil, however, starting from colonial times (Silverstein, 2002), those otherwise multidirectional, short-term and close range flows have been disrupted, exacerbated or redirected mainly towards Europe and the global North.

The Mediterranean has diachronically been a crucial site not just for the modulation of human mobility and the reinscription of territorial and symbolic boundaries in the region – and the volumes of regulations that manage them – but also for the moderation of public dispositions and affective politics through the production of narratives around unauthorised EU-bound migration (Musarò, 2017). These developments, combined with the steady increase of arrivals since the early 2000s, as depicted in Figure 2, and the ensuing piecemeal adjustments of the political and legal responses to irregular migration have increased the region's centrality for the development of such processes both at a national and a supranational level.

The tensions and inconsistencies between those long-term processes had been largely overlooked, until their eventual culmination into the so-called 2015 ‘refugee crisis’ at Europe’s southeastern borders in the Aegean sea and was then swiftly relayed northwest through the ‘Balkan human corridor’, raising a humanitarian and political maelstrom at its wake (Phillips, 2016). Under the added strain of the compounded humanitarian and socioeconomic crises afflicting the European south, and especially Greece (Brekke *et al.*, 2014; Vieten and Valentine, 2015), the southeastern Mediterranean borders, and the Aegean islands in particular have emerged as one of the great disaster sites of the twenty-first century (Papataxiarchis, 2016, p. 9), as revealed by the number of migrant fatalities illustrated in Figure 3 on p. 44, and Figure 4 on p. 45. They are also sites of profound affective engagement, whereupon Europe is forced to confront whether it remains compliant to its political project’s founding principles that aimed, among other things, to safeguard precisely against such atrocities (Schuman, 1950), and to re-examine its ensuing policy priorities regarding the limits of its territorial control, its tolerance to difference and its capacity for social inclusion (Carrera *et al.*, 2015). It is imperative, therefore, to undertake ethnographic explorations of this region to empirically locate these processes and capture the richness and interdependence of the phenomena at play.

Any approach of the Mediterranean space should remain sensitive to the concatenation of situated histories, temporalities and socialities that constitute it, and should be able to address this region both as a whole and as a sum of its parts, while also considering the specificities of each part separately. A variety of locations would, therefore, need to be identified and investigated through long-term in-depth research. This would allow for a range of multiscalar and mobile boundaries to emerge, beyond the readily observable and spatially fixed geopolitical ones. Although this research, due to its temporal and practical constraints, concentrates mainly on two locations within the area in question – Athens and Lesvos, it nonetheless draws insights and credibility from the long-term multi-sited observation of various places (illustrated on Map 1 on p. ix and further analysed in the following chapter). Impressions and reflections from all those sites are inevitably drawn and interweaved into the making

Figure 3: Irregular migrant fatalities at European borders, recorded across the Mediterranean, 1998-2018. Chart compiled by the author.

Data Sources: - For the period 1998 – 2013: (Last *et al.*, 2017) with data from UNITED's (2018) list of documented refugee and migrant deaths.
 - For the period 2014 – 2018: IOM Missing Migrants (2019).

and deciphering of the two locales in focus, either through their investigation and narrative synthesis in the research context or through their actual sociospatial interdependence. This multi-sited and experientially-oriented approach to fieldwork also helps reveal the nuances and local specificities of bordering processes, as well as the affective intensities and power dynamics at play between a variety of actors at those locations.

Figure 4: Irregular migrant fatalities recorded by world region. Chart compiled by the author. Data source: IOM Missing Migrants (2019).

Border/scaping as method

Researching borders through this kind of empirical engagement with their sociospatial landscape can prompt an analytical move beyond the imaginary of the line towards an understandings of borders as ‘complex, multiscalar, multidimensional, yet dynamic entities that have different symbolic and material forms, functions, and locations’ (Laine, 2016, p. 465) and as a set of ‘practices and discourses that “spread” into the whole of society’ (Paasi, 1999, p. 670). One category of such practices is that of affective practices, which will be touched upon in more detail in the upcoming sections. In brief, they are approached as regular (even if not necessarily always routine), relatively ordered and patterned, socially consequential processes that are bound up with ongoing social relations (Wetherell, 2013; Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, 2018). As critical border scholars have shown, borders are not fixed territorial lines of separation at the edge of the nation state (Balibar, 1998), but rather a ‘complex

choreography of border lines in multiple lived places' (Gielis and van Houtum, 2012, p. 797). Such conceptualisations prompt the border to unfold into a landscape of relational, performative and dialogic bordering processes resulting from the interplay between a broad assemblage of border actors.

Through their conceptualisation of 'border as method', Mezzadra and Neilson (2011, 2013) offer a standpoint from which a 'dethroning' of the superiority of the geopolitical and material borders as objects of analysis can be attempted and highlighted their underlying logics of filtering and differentiation. Instead of taking borders as primordially fixed entities that follow the cartographic imagination of clear-cut lines that neatly divide spaces and regulate degrees of containment or passage, the 'border as method' approach traces the role of borders in the articulation of processes around the global mobility flows of people, capital and materials and the production of space around those practices. Following Mezzadra's and Neilson's work, this study takes the border not only as an object of inquiry, or an abstract concept, but as an epistemic angle with heuristic potential in itself.

Undertaking border as method does not mean 'that the border provides an abstract methodology that can be detached from its material contexts and applied generally across any number of empirical situations [...] method [...] emerge(s) precisely from the material circumstances at hand, which, in the case of borders, are ones of tension and conflict, partition and connection, traversing and barricading, life and death' (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2008, para. 2). Moreover, as they mention elsewhere: 'the question of border as method is something more than methodological. It is above all a question of politics [...] method is as much about acting on the world as it is about knowing it' (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2008). The borderscape notion responds to the conceptualisation above, as it allows for the 'study of the border as mobile, perspectival, and relational', making it possible to move in the direction of multiperspectival border studies (Rumford, 2012), and it highlights the manifold overlapping topologies around borders, and their performative, participatory and senseable dimensions (Brambilla, 2014; Brambilla et al., 2015).

The notion of borderscapes first appears in the book ‘Berlin/Berlin: The wall in the expressive culture of a divided city’ by Stein (1993), but it is generally attributed to the work of Perera (2007, 2009), who wrote about the multiplicity and fluidity of interactions and crossings of moving bodies in the Australian Pacific liquid borderspace and noted the affective connections between people and specific landscapes, which rests on particular forms of political partaking (2007, p. 278)²². The term gained currency through the edited volume ‘Borderscapes: Hidden geographies and politics at territory's edge’ by Rajaram & Grundy-Warr (2007). As visualised by the Ngram presented in Figure 5 below, which, despite the restrictions of its temporal scope (searches only return results up to 2008) it still indicates the upward trend of the borderscapes concept in scholarship since then. For Rajaram & Grundy-Warr the borderscape is ‘a zone where the multiplicity and chaos of the universal and the discomfits and possibilities of the body intrude ... to indicate the complexity and vitality of, and at, the border’ (ibid., p. x). They also note the borderscape’s investment with particular moral frameworks and

Figure 5: Frequency chart of English language results of the term ‘borderscape’ between 1980 and 2008 in Google Books text corpora. Source: <https://books.google.com/ngrams>

²² For a historical overview of the borderscape concept’s emergence and a disambiguation of various definitions of the term, see also Dell’Agnese and Amilhat Szary (2015, pp. 4–8).

affective values, as they are often understood ‘as barriers to threats or pollution’ (ibid., p. xxxi).

Since 2007 several scholars have used the potential of the borderscapes concept in their work. Among them, the work of Brambilla is particularly notable, as she has taken up the concept from a phenomenological perspective to investigate a variety of issues, such as pluriversal citizenship (2010); the urban borderscapes of Berlin (Brambilla and Van Houtum, 2012); the multiplying material as well as epistemological borderlands between EU member states and African countries (2014); the critical potential of the borderscapes concept (2015a), the constant re-creation of different forms of invisibility by audio-visual borderscapes (Brambilla and Pötzsch, 2017); the move from the borderscape as a concept to borderscaping as a method that can help explore the effects of bordering processes and their temporal and spatial operations at the level of day-to-day practices (Pötzsch and Brambilla, 2015); borderscapes as a looking glass through which to rethink the (Euro/African) borders beyond the modern state imaginary in the current era of globalisation and transnational flows (2015b), as well as borderscapes as sites of generative struggles where alternative subjectivities and agencies can be shaped (Brambilla and Jones, 2019). In her work the borderscape emerges as a landscape of competing meanings and facilitates a move beyond consensus to encompass the views and interpretations of actors who are differentially positioned within it, as well as their practices ‘through which fluctuating borders are imagined, materially established, experienced, lived as well as reinforced and blocked but also crossed, traversed and inhabited.’ (Brambilla 2014b). Touching upon those imagined, experiential and lived aspects of bordering, which are instigated through specific practices, implies the inclusion of affective practices (Wetherell, 2013) in this configuration as well.

Other noteworthy recent works on borderscapes that touch upon several of the themes of the present research include studies on the making of humanitarian borderscapes in Greece within the refugee crisis context (Pallister-Wilkins, 2018); migrants negotiating Malaysian urban borderscapes (Franck, 2019); media depictions of Woomera detainees (Hoenig, 2011); Australia’s use of humanitarian

aid and border security support to immobilise asylum seekers (Watkins, 2017); invisibilisation practices of the EU's bordering processes at the Punta Tarifa borderscape (Ferrer-Gallardo, Albet-Mas and Espineira, 2015); the exploration of the Couto Mixto border area through borderscapes and border poetics analyses (Paül and Trillo-Santamaría, 2015); the cross-scalar socio-spatial dynamics of conflict, resistance and encounter at the Ceuta–Morocco borderscapes (Buoli, 2014); and the cultural and artistic production at and around borders (Dell'Agnese and Amilhat Szary, 2015), among others.

From the sum of these works it occurs that the borderscape is not a static object, neither an area staked in place by specific demarcations or coordinates, nor a fully codified notion in border theory. Rather, it should be understood as 'a way of thinking about the border and the bordering process not only on the border, but also beyond the line of the border, beyond the border as a place, beyond the landscape through which the border runs, and beyond borderlands with their territorial contiguities to the border' (Schimanski, 2015, p. 35).

This landscape is constituted by multiple actors, both human and non-human, and the entire spectrum of their encounters and interactions as they engage in the continuous borderwork of de/constructing, monitoring, challenging, inhabiting and trespassing borders and boundaries at different spatial scales. Migrants (tres)passing the diffused EU borders mobilise a range of the borders' latent capacities (human, technological, legal etc.), and set multiple other actors in motion, thereby 'catalysing' the emergence of borderscapes in my view.

In this study borderscapes are understood as liminal, overlapping landscapes that function as contact zones and as charged fields of interaction between shifting configurations of relationally-positioned animate and inanimate actors. They encompass a fragmented terrain of border struggles and emergent agencies, as they enclose a range of contestations between political imaginaries and practices (including affective ones) transpiring from below (Doevenspeck, 2011; Wonders, 2015), as well as those exerted from above. These

spaces are extremely elusive and a brief glimpse of them can be obtained through a process similar to what Megoran calls ‘biographies of international boundaries’: an exploration of ‘how specific boundaries materialize, rematerialize, and dematerialize in different ways, in different contexts, at different scales, and at different times’ (2012, p. 477). Approaching the southeastern Mediterranean from this viewpoint, and through border biographies collected from actors’ narratives, among other sources, would allow for the historicity, relationality and affectivity of borders/scapes to unfold, and would facilitate the exploration of the extended and extensive ‘top-down’, and ‘bottom-up’ borderwork that the construction, enaction, and contestation of the EU border regime entails.

Brambilla, Laine, Scott and Bocchi (2015) in their landmark edited volume on this thematic ‘Borderscaping: Imaginations and practices of border making’, extend Mezzadra and Neilson’s ‘border as a method’ approach and assert that adopting *borderscaping* as method ‘involves a shift from a fixed border knowledge to a knowledge capable of throwing light on a space of negotiating actors, experiences and representations articulated at the intersection of competing and even conflicting tension’ (ibid., p. 4). This approach avoids concentrating one’s study so much on ‘the life and deeds of the borders, but to *think from the borders themselves*’ (Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2006, p. 214, emphasis in original).

Thinking from the borders themselves and following their red thread throughout a research enquiry can thus reveal how a variety of bordering processes, policies, perceptions and interpretations are spelled out on the ground and then observe their emergent tensions, conflicts and convergences. As Mezzadra and Neilson have noted, this epistemic viewpoint ‘requires a research process that continually accounts for and reacts to the multifarious battles and negotiations ... that constitute the border both as an institution and a set of social relationships’ (2008, para. 2). Consequently, taking up the border(scape) as a method has been fundamental in approaching the contesting imaginaries, and charged fields of inter/action that emerge and congeal into the variable geometry of the borderscapes addressed in this research.

Geographic affects and multidisciplinary *métissage*

While going through my fieldwork experiences, as well as when trying to analyse my research material, I found myself in need of an approach that would be able to speak to those aspects of bordering and border-crossing that refused to fall into neat categorisations. They were messy and constituted not only of intersubjective interactions, but also of the affects discharged by spaces and materialities. How could I engage with the rise of intense somatic reactions (rising panic, feeling like running away, one's breath and heartbeat getting out of control) induced by certain places (an airport control queue, a metro ticket-cancelling turnstile)? How could I unpack the instrumentalisation of one's physical body as if it were no more than a rather unreliable tool, a mere means to an end (the need to train its involuntary reactions, to learn how to disguise and 'falsify' one's anatomy to match a stranger's photograph and biometrics in your counterfeit documents – from one's hair colour, eyebrow shape and the odd mole, to the right gaze, tone of voice, physical comportment and sense of fashion that would exude one's right to pass). How could I talk about the need to *incorporate* the incorporeal for it to become one with you and take effect (having to ingest the *juju*²³ to actualise the potential of its spell) if I was to, eventually, understand anything about the myriad insurgent assemblages of border performances, materialities as well as the vernacular knowledges and spatially-induced affectivities around them?

To address these issues, the present research adopted a geographic approach to the thematic of affect in its exploration of the eastern Mediterranean borderscape, which gradually evolved into an inquiry on the affective geographies and politics at play within the region. The conceptualisation of affect that is hereby proposed takes

²³ Juju (from the French 'joujou'= toy), in the context of West African folk witchcraft, refers to an object that has been deliberately and ceremonially infused with magical powers, which can be summoned both for positive and nefarious outcomes. Juju magic operates on the principle of spiritual contagiousness and physical contact. Although juju rituals with regard to African migration have mostly been researched from the perspective of coercion and human trafficking (Taliani, 2018), in the case of this research and the incidents witnessed, prospective irregular border crossers were engaging willingly to these rituals. They were often required to eat certain ceremonially-prepared foods or wear spell-bound clothes, or other items, directly on their skin right before attempting to cross borders.

into consideration the distinctions between affects, feelings, sensations and emotions, which will be further detailed below, yet it also incorporates them into a broader framework that encompasses the motions, emotions, powers, rationalities, materialities, internal arousals, bodily postures, facial expressions, sensations and senses, and the spectral hauntings that borders are imbued with. These variable configurations are experienced and transmitted in ways that go beyond – yet do not preclude – the subjectivity of multiple (not exclusively human) bodies that are emplaced within and are conditioned by specific environments.

Despite the conceptual (in)distinctions between affect, feeling and emotion, which are often used almost interchangeably in a lot of academic scholarship, even in view of their significant connotative differences (Flatley, 2008, p. 12; Hutchison, 2016, p. 15), it is neither possible nor the primary task of this work to review the full breadth of these literatures. It is, however, useful to appreciate their key differences and outline how this study has been informed by scholarship on affect deriving from the main fields on which my research draws.

The concept of affect refers broadly to an emotive domain, or emotional state (perceived as an always existing internal cognitive/mental state) (Stein, 1999). However, as Thrift posits, ‘affect is not simply emotion’ and, therefore, it cannot be reduced to the individual perceptions and affectations of singular persons (2008, p. 116). Affect and emotion are overlapping, yet neither subsuming nor mutually exclusive, dimensions of human feeling. Emotion, as an individually-borne inner psychological state projected through outward expression, is a conscious and discourse-embedded aspect of it, which does not capture the relationality and transience inherent in structures of affect.

‘Affects are not feelings’, either: ‘they are becomings that go beyond those who live through them’ (Deleuze, 1995, p. 137). They have also been described as ‘*virtual synesthetic perspectives* anchored in ... the actually existing particular things that embody them’ (Massumi, 2002, p. 35, emphasis in original), which are ‘implicated

in the sensible materiality of corporeality, but in a way that opens up the actuality of experience' (McCormack, 2003). Following Spinoza's perspective, who perceived affects as related – but not homologous – states of body and mind, which act as circulating forces and forms of encounter within and between bodies that have the capacity to both affect and be affected, affects emerge as variable and corporeally contingent embodied states (Deleuze, 1988), produced and transmitted through bodily practices (Damasio, 2003). They are labile, fluid and spontaneous and spread rapidly through groups via processes of emotional/affective 'contagion' (Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson, 1993; Elfenbein, 2014; Erisen, Lodge and Taber, 2014), or through the operation of 'affective networks' (Hoggett, 2009, pp. 10–11).

Affects' scope, however, goes far beyond that of human corporeality, as a range of other human, non-human and environmental elements are also implicated in their emergence. From this perspective, they can be studied in sites and spaces beyond the scope of humans, their subjectivities, and their psychic or emotional aptitudes. Navaro-Yashin's work on affective geography (2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012), emphasizes affects' complexity and changeability, especially in relation to the landscapes and im/materialities in which they are embedded. In her work, Navaro-Yashin extends affect into the material culture, drawing on scholars such as Lacan, Foucault, Latour and Brennan, avoiding the pitfalls of either an extreme post-humanist approach, or a constructionist subject-centered stance. Affects in this view 'transform, metamorphose, and take new shape or colour through time [...] in relation to space, materialities, and the environment, as well as to politics, polity, and administration' (Navaro-Yashin, 2012, p. 215).

Beyond the micro scale of the personal, and within studies engaging with global transformations, such as the widespread reverberations of borders and migration, affect should not be understood as a mere epiphenomenon (Richard and Rydnycky, 2009; Laszczkowski and Reeves, 2015). Its dual lexical nature, as both a noun and a transitive verb which 'simultaneously makes both its subject and its object' (Richard and Rydnycky, 2009, p. 59) and thereby 'produces those

who enact it and those upon whom it acts' (ibid., p. 62), designates it as a powerful, albeit overlooked, analytical concept that has the potential to illuminate ongoing sociopolitical processes emanating from 'above' and from 'below', such as the construction, enactment and contestation of borders.

Addressing questions of borders, politics and power from the perspective of affect and emotion, however, has only been incidental in political science and geography, which – until the recent multidisciplinary expansion of the field – were the principal disciplines for the study of borders. This was mainly due to the intellectual hegemony of rationality and the domination the 'emotion-proofing' of research, reflective of a 'non-emotions period' of much of the social sciences (Barbalet, 1998, p. 19), as well as a result of the strongly positivist and quantitative heritage of geography and political science before their 'cultural turn' (Barnes, 2001; Sheppard, 2001).

However, despite the recent affective turn in the humanities and social sciences (Ticineto-Clough and Halley, 2007), and the ensuing 'virtual explosion of research and theoretical writing' on this topic (Barrett, 2010, p. 203), research at the nexus of affect, border/urban studies, geography, migration, and politics remains limited – even more so with regard to this study's particular geographic scope. To address this lacuna this research seeks to integrate approaches and insights derived from different sub-fields of knowledge (primarily human geography, border studies, migration studies, anthropology and political science/psychology). Each of them offers a partial vantage point to the inquiry at hand. In the following paragraphs I will briefly present some of the most prominent scholarship engaging with affect within each of those fields and indicate how my use of the concept has been informed by them.

Within geography, Anderson's and Smith's call to explore the 'feelings and emotions which make the world as we know and live it' (2001, p. 9) has been a turning point in geography's appreciation of the role of affect and emotion and the emergence of emotional and affective geographies. Aside from a few general theoretical considerations on the use of affect, feeling and emotion within the field

(Anderson and Smith, 2001; Davidson and Milligan, 2004; Thien, 2005; Anderson and Harrison, 2006; Pile, 2009), the list of studies that address spatial affects in the context of cross-border migration remains short²⁴. The notable work of Reeves (2007, 2011) which focuses on the affective life of the state across the southern Kyrgyzstan borders probes the elicitation of ‘ordinary affects’ (Stewart, 2007) at the intersection of political geography, border studies and the anthropology of the state and enriches understandings of the everyday spatialisations of the state, and the diffuse work performed by borderlanders in this direction.

However, it is the ethnographic work of Navaro-Yashin (2007, 2012) on the affective geographies emerging from the interplay of people, landscapes, material objects and immaterial phantomic presences in the postwar environment of the ‘make-believe state’ of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus that has played a formative role in the development of the present research. Navaro-Yashin (2012) relocates the establishment of political sovereignty into the field of affect and materiality, whereby statehood is constituted as a network of practices (p. 43) between humans, material objects and social/political/legal/economic and administrative transactions (p. 14). Affect in her work emerges as an effect of these interactions, while also permeating and residing in spatial environments and atmospheres. Sensing is proposed as a method to understand, conceptualise and decipher one’s surroundings and objects (p. 20), and, consequently, it is also suggested that a certain degree of ‘affective attunement’ to one’s surroundings (and to those of one’s ethnographic subjects) is an essential component of the researcher’s experience and engagement with their field of study.

The ‘network of practices’ between people and materialities that Navaro-Yashin refers to (2012, p. 44) also includes affective practices,

²⁴ Among those, are studies on the incorporated body memories of migrants from the colonial Dutch East Indies, which are triggered at specific geographic locations (Dragojlovic, 2015); the affective constructions of home among migrants in New Zealand (Cain, Meares and Read, 2015); the affective understandings of place among returning Philippino migrants (McKay, 2005); and the spatial affects of suburban residential communities of Hong Kong immigrants in Vancouver and Toronto (Kobayashi, Preston and Murnaghan, 2011).

which I approach through Wetherell's proposition to rethink affect through the perspective of 'affective practice', instead. Affect as practice is defined as the 'recruitment and often synchronous assembling of multimodal resources, including, most crucially, body states. It is the participation of the emoting body that makes an assemblage an example of affect rather than an example of some other kind of social practice' (2013, p. 159). Highlighting the particularity of embodiment in affects, Wetherell locates affects in a dense web of interconnections between the discursive, the social, the psychological and physiological, and notes that:

In affective practice, bits of the body (e.g. facial muscles, thalamic-amygdala pathways in the brain, heart rate, regions of the prefrontal cortex, sweat glands, etc.) get patterned together with feelings and thoughts, interaction patterns and relationships, narratives and interpretative repertoires, social relations, personal histories, and ways of life (2013, pp. 13–14).

Accordingly, this study has observed how affects become patterned spatially, culturally, temporally and intersubjectively, through practices and how, seemingly vague, affective flows are sedimented and signified through such practices into assemblages that have the capacity to mobilise individuals and groups. However, my understanding of affect differs from Wetherell's exclusive focus on human affects. I approach it not as a strictly intersubjective occurrence deriving solely from human bodies and consciousness, but also as an expression of the affectivity discharged by different spaces and the ecology of environments and materialities that constitute them.

Within borderlands studies, much of the research on affect explores the obscured interrelationships between the affective expressions at border spaces and the (infra)structures of power and control that permeate them²⁵. (Im)material, multiscalar borders, however, do not

²⁵ Relevant scholarship includes work on mobility and affective engineering and enactment in airports (Adey, 2008, 2009); the affective forces of digital technology and nature upon border-crossing bodies and the biopolitics at play along the US-Mexico border (Johannes, 2015, 2016); the affective politics of Canadian immigration policy and border control (Vukov, 2007); as well as the everyday geopolitics of encounter between local ranchers and migrants in Arizona (Williams and Boyce, 2013).

only appear across the edges of nation states' political space, but they are increasingly traversing their interior subnational territories as well (Das and Poole, 2004, p. 19). This is a common occurrence within large metropolitan centers, where migrants and refugees often congregate – their presence further intensifying pre-existing sociospatial inequalities and divisions. However, the affective perspectives of this 'borderland urbanism' (Iossifova, 2015), with which the first and the third publication of this dissertation grapples, remain persistently sidelined²⁶.

Migration studies have been more open to the utilisation of emotion and affect, either through general theorizations on migration, affect and the senses (Wise and Chapman, 2005; Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015; Carling and Collins, 2018), or through specific case studies, which are, however, more oriented towards the inquiry of emotions rather than of affect (Anderson and Harrison, 2006; Ryan, 2008; Svašek, 2010).

Anthropological engagements with borders, materiality, embodiment, affect and different aspects of migration have recently been enriched by the notable work of Povrzanović Frykman on 'sensitive objects' (Frykman and Povrzanović Frykman, 2016; Povrzanović Frykman, 2016), which fills an important gap by connecting studies of affect with studies of material culture from an ethnological perspective. Her work has had a significant impact on my approach and understanding of the research material, as it examines the production of affective atmospheres through people's projections onto material objects and the embodiment or triggering of affects by objects,

²⁶ This omission persists despite the increasing scholarly attention on the issue of urban borders (Hatuka and Kallus, 2006; Grimson, 2008; Boano and Martén, 2013; Iossifova, 2013; Palmberger, 2013; Pullan, 2013; Sassen, 2013; Fauser, 2017; Scott and Sohn, 2018); the emergence of border(crossing) cities (Sohn and Lara-Valencia, 2013; Sohn, 2014); and the phenomenon of migration-induced urban fragmentation (Marconi, 2010; Merrill, 2014; Darling, 2017; Kramsch, 2017). Some notable exceptions are works such as Jansen's (2013) on urban borders' materiality in post-conflict Sarajevo; Franzén's (2001) study on the preventive restructuring of space through border controls in urban areas; and Konopinski's (2014) exploration of bordering temporalities and security anticipations at an urban checkpoint in Tel Aviv.

while also advocating the significant merits of ethnography in this endeavour.

Special reference is due to the exceptional book by Shahram Khosravi ‘The “illegal” traveller: An autoethnography of borders’ (2010), which recounts the author’s personal journey as an ‘illegal’ traveller from Iran to Sweden through Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, in a profoundly poignant manner. Khosravi’s thickly descriptive account, rife with personal anecdotes and biographical vignettes, renders intelligible even to the most unsuspecting reader the depth and reach of visceral affectation induced by the border performance of ‘illegal’ crossing (such as on pp. 63–64) – without, however, explicitly addressing affect.

Although, as mentioned earlier, the rationalistic dominant models of academic political analysis had displaced the study of emotions and affect (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2001), within contemporary political science and international relations, particularly within the field of political psychology (Marcus and MacKuen, 2001; Sears, 2001; Lodge and Taber, 2005; Neuman *et al.*, 2007; Brader, Valentino and Suhay, 2008), there is a growing recognition that emotions are an inherent part of the international system, both regarding the behaviour of states (Eznack, 2011, 2017), as well as regarding the formation of affective communities (Hutchison, 2010, 2013, 2016; Hutchison and Bleiker, 2014), spanning scales from mass political behaviour (Neuman *et al.*, 2007) to subjective experiences and affective intensities reproducing the state in the everyday (Laszczkowski and Reeves, 2015).

Despite the work in the field of politics and affects/emotions being still quite scattered, it is gradually becoming easier to discern some of the contours and clusters within it (Thomson and Hogget, 2012, p. 4). These clusters²⁷ roughly refer to six categories (*ibid.*, pp. 5–7),

²⁷ Those clusters refer to the relation between affects/emotions and political discourse (Solomon, 2012); affects/emotions’ role in dynamics in post/conflict situations (Åhäll and Gregory, 2015; Gullette and Heathershaw, 2015); their effects on social movements (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta,

several aspects of which are relevant to the affective politics around borders encountered during this project. Similarly, focusing on the affective tropes covered by the literature on political affects, we observe that they cover a wide range of the affective/emotional spectrum. Those affects were encountered on several occasions during fieldwork: joy (Penttinen, 2013); anger and indignation (Hall, 2011; Eznack, 2017); humiliation (Saurette, 2006; Fattah and Fierke, 2009); nostalgia (Sucharov, 2013); melancholia (Flatley, 2008); revenge (Löwenheim and Heimann, 2008); empathy (Crawford, 2014; Pedwell, 2014); desire (Engel, 2010); fear (Tang, 2008; Pain, 2010; Laurén, 2012; Crawford, 2014); threat (Greenhill, 2016); loss and grief (Stierl, 2016; Danewid, 2017); as well as pain and abjection (Pain and Smith, 2008; Schott, 2011), among others.

Lasting effects and affects of liminality

Liminality is a term that derives from classic social anthropology, denoting the in-between life stage experienced by persons who are going through a rite of passage. ‘Rites of passage’ as conceptualised by van Gennep (1960) are composed by three distinct but successive stages (separation, liminality, and aggregation) after the eruption of a ‘triggering event’, which forces individuals to depart from their communities of origin, distance themselves spatially and suspend their former identities for specified periods of time before finally returning to their former communities having improved their social status by undergoing several trials. Turner (1967) expanded on van Gennep’s work by conceptualising liminal subjects as ‘interstructural beings’ that exist in a ‘betwixt and between’ state. During this stage they are considered outcasts: unclean, psychically sullied and physically polluting to those around them, relegated to a condition of relinquishment of all their rights, stripped of their possessions and personhood and facing imminent extinction at others’ discretion.

2001); their impact on political campaigning and communication (Brader, 2005; Weber, 2013); their involvement on governance and policymaking (Sasley, 2010; Jupp, Pykett and Smith, 2016); their contribution to understandings of humanitarian impulse in politics (Fassin, 2008; Hutchison, 2014; Jackson, 2014); and the role of affects/emotions in international relations (Hall and Ross, 2015; Koschut et al., 2017).

The analogies between Turner's understanding of liminality and the reality experienced by migrants and refugees are apparent, even more so as Turner describes these performances of social drama as occurring within certain frames that enclose people within some type of symbolic or physical border and having their plight offered as a spectacle to non-participants. Therefore, the concept of liminality as an analytical tool can be particularly productive to refugee and migration research, as well as to border studies.

Indeed, the extended Eastern Aegean region and its islands, such as Lesbos, have been characterised as 'liminal EU territory', not only because of its proximity to borders-as-limits, but also because they constitute locations where 'authority forcibly disentangles rights from the territory' and moves citizenship to more precarious forms (Papoutsi *et al.*, 2018, p. 4). This happens under the effect of 'liminal porocratic institutions' (Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos, 2008, pp. 162–182), which operate beyond open democratic control and governance, and which partake in the regulation of migration and mobility throughout EU space by governing the porosity of borders. Those institutions 'instead of controlling populations or individuals at geographic borders [focus] on creating various levees far beyond, on, and inside the borders in order to manage migratory flows' (*ibid.*, p. xvii). One of those levees is the regulation of visceral and affective experiences of- and responses to borders 'from above'.

But even at locations far removed from border regions, right at the heart of large urban centers, such as Athens and its iconic central square of Omónoia, people in 'liminal moments', such as migrants and other 'undesirables', are also seen as inhabiting 'spaces of liminality' (Noussia and Lyons, 2009), which are public places 'intimately associated with personal moments and movements of transformation ... when people are in transition from one stage of life to another' (*ibid.*, p. 617)²⁸. Liminality is not only a spatial experience, however, as it has temporal dimensions too, when seen through the

²⁸ See for example the excerpt from a migrant's diary describing their view on the unanticipated liminal social relations unfolding around Omónoia in this dissertation's first publication: 'African border crossings in a 'city of Others': Undocumented African border-crossings in Athens' (p. 143, article's internal page numbering).

lens of migrant waiting ‘as a transitory and transformative space which lies between life stages, statuses and material contexts’ (Sutton, Wels and Vigneswaran, 2011, p. 30). Similarly, migrants are subjected to conditions of ‘liminal legality’ (Menjivar, 2006), understood as the in-between status between the legal categories of un/documentedness, which shapes fundamentally every aspect and sphere of migrants’ lives. Liminality has also been understood as an embodied quality of marginalized bodies, which are seen as ‘liminal artefacts’ ‘produced at the borders of both intersecting discourses of materiality and through the multiple status of bodies as both real and surreal, subjective and objective’ (Riggs, 2006, p. 59).

Liminality, both as a term as well as a liminal life experience, merits further exploration at the nexus of border and migration studies, especially with regard to its visceral and affective dimensions. This research addresses these perspectives after observing their unfolding on Lesvos and their enfolding into the lives and bodies of several research participants. Liminality has thus been explored as being a permanent, portable and protracted condition, experienced somatically and affectively by borderlanders, irrespective of their legal status or their belonging to the national majority²⁹.

Within the tremendous sociopolitical and cultural transformation, caused by ongoing refugee exodus and arrival at the margins of Europe, viewed here as a rite of passage, former hierarchical social positions are not just suspended, but reversed or dismantled altogether. People whose lives are intrinsically connected to the territorial borders of the nation-state – whether newly-arrived irregular migrants and international volunteers or the island’s permanent population – find themselves deeply affected by comparable levels of existential ambiguity and disorientation. They are immobilized at the invisible threshold of an uncertain future, locked in the middle stage of this ritualized, punitive – and often sacrificial – transition, which becomes an unnerving impasse. Liminality, thus, breaks away from its

²⁹ This condition of persistent and protracted liminality is further detailed in Paper 2 of this dissertation: ‘They won’t let us come, they won’t let us stay, they won’t let us leave’. Liminality in the Aegean borderscape: The case of irregular migrants, volunteers and locals on Lesvos’.

classic form of a linear tripartite passage and metamorphoses into a temporally-extended, mobile and routinised condition staked upon the bodies of those who are caught up in it, transcending the spatial confines of the spaces they inhabit or transit through. Furthermore, liminality has also been used in this study to touch upon the transgressive and liminal communicative medium of graffiti and inscriptions found in border areas, which offers diachronic material evidence on bordering processes and people's affects³⁰.

Current theoretical lacunae in the study of borders/capes and affect

The fields of IMER and border studies offer important theoretical insights that can contribute to the analysis of practices related to the construction, enaction and contestation of bordering processes identified during this research. However, certain dimensions remain underexplored. In response to the request to 'extrapolate new border concepts, logics, and imaginaries that capture the changing perspective on what borders are supposed to be and where they may be supposed to lie' (Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2009, p. 583), this section will identify some of the weaknesses of current theoretical accounts regarding the ways borders are understood and imagined, which this research proceeds to address. Through the interweaving of these concepts, a rather subtle but significant aspect of b/ordering, which was identified during fieldwork, will eventually emerge in the coming chapters: the notion of affective borderscapes, which is this study's original contribution to our understanding of bordering processes.

Firstly, according to the call of Basham and Vaughan-Williams (2013, p. 2), a more intersectionally-sensitive understanding of how sovereign power – and, by extension, bordering – operates is needed to address the (re)production of particular spatialisations of politics and the ways in which different people are affected differently by

³⁰ This approach is described in Paper 3 of this dissertation: 'Writings on the wall: Textual traces of transit in the Aegean borderscape'.

them. Although this research does not explicitly deploy the concept of intersectionality in its classic sense³¹, the foundations of its argument are grounded on a position related to some of this notion's underlying rationalities, according to which borders operate and interact to shape the border crossers' experiences.

In this view, as previously elaborated, borders are not static, undifferentiated lines but biopolitical and virtual systems of multidimensional and multidirectional control, which are imbued with gendered and racialized logics that work towards being literally incorporated by those subjected to them. Those internalisable borders embed themselves in human bodies, circulating with- and operating from within them. They then proceed to – either by design or oversight – differentiate and stratify these bodies depending on a range of physical or ascribed characteristics they possess. As the findings of this research demonstrate, 'borderly'³² bodies and materialities (Green and Malm, 2013) bear different affective affordances³³ (Jensen, Sheller and Wind, 2015; Hufendiek, 2017) in relation to their sociospatial environments, and as a result affect and are affected by borders (and vice versa) differently, thereby enacting an 'irregular' application of intersectional discrimination.

An additional perspective on bordering processes that, despite its significance, has not received adequate attention and be will partly addressed in this research is the fragmentation, territorial dispersion and multiscale enaction of borders within urban spaces for the exclusion and control of migrants, both at the meso/macro level, as

³¹ Intersectionality in feminist studies examines how different aspects of social and political discrimination overlap with gender (Crenshaw, 1991).

³² The term 'borderly' refers to the sense of 'borders at work' that some spaces emanate due to certain attributes they possess. To quote Sarah Green, '[it] feel[s] as if there is something in the air, the streets, the walls, the parks, perhaps even in the people hanging around a place that gives off a sense of borders at work' (Green and Malm, 2013, p. 9).

³³ Affordances, according to Gibson (2015, pp. 119–135) are perceivable features of the environment (such as the medium, substances, surfaces, objects, places, and other organisms) that exist objectively but only in relation and complementarily to another (human) organism and its abilities. These features are of value to the (human) organism as they offer possibilities for action and agency, and they highlight things that should be approached or avoided. Following from that, affective affordances 'are said to mediate the affective and emotional relationships between human and non-human bodies, increasing or decreasing their bodily capacity to act' (Clement and Waitt, 2018, p. 254).

well as at the micro scale. This is a particularly salient topic, especially within the EU's supranational space, where newfound governance arrangements have emerged for the control of borders and migration in territories far removed from Europe's external borders, with the help of a variety of national and supranational, state and non-state actors (Fauser, 2017).

Affect, as described in the preceding section, has mostly been addressed from within the boundaries of discrete disciplines. I suggest that studying it from the perspective of inherently multidisciplinary fields, such as border- and migration studies, which actively foster the borrowing and exchange of ideas, concepts and theories, and promote interdisciplinary engagement among the social sciences and the humanities (Laine *et al.*, no date) holds significant merits for the advancement of affect theory and broadening its relevance and currency.

As such, interdisciplinary and multi-method research studies, such as the present one, which facilitates a more systematic and comprehensive inquiry on the ways in which borders are perceived, experienced, embodied and contested in affective relationality, produce new and original contributions to identified gaps in the existing scholarship. Through the synthesis of theories and notions that stem from border studies, IMER, and a range of cognate fields this research gives new thrust to the study of borderscapes, by foregrounding their imbrication with affect and calling attention to the implications this might bear on the understanding of bordering practices.

Conclusion

This chapter provided the theoretical grounding of this dissertation and offered an overview of the main concepts that inform the notion of affective borderscapes upon which its thesis is based, and which will be eventually synthesised in Chapter six. Firstly, I justified the Mediterranean spatial grounding of this study, which takes into consideration the region's particularities and curbs the pitfalls of methodological nationalism, territorial entrapment, and widespread Eurocentrism that often afflict related research. Then, I proceeded to

lay out the thesis' theoretical foundations by outlining the key concepts used throughout this work (borders, borderscapes, affect and liminality) as problematized mainly within the fields of IMER and border studies, and relevant disciplines.

Borders in this work are understood as complex, multiscalar and multidimensional entities, which apart from their material and symbolic aspects, should be envisioned as sets of practices and discourses – including affective ones. Borderscapes emerge as manifold overlapping topologies around borders, which possess performative, participatory and senseable dimensions and in this thesis are defined as liminal contact zones and charged fields of interaction between a variety of human and non-human actors engaging in borderwork from 'below', as well as from 'above'.

An overview of the notion of affect and its disambiguation from feelings and emotions was then presented. Affect was shown to include, yet supersede human-centered emotions and senses, and encompass embodied and precognitive perspectives, embracing the affectivity exerted by various environments and im/materialities, thereby asserting the significance of geographic conceptualisations of affective practices. A presentation of research on affect within various fields followed (geography, migration studies, borderlands studies, anthropology and political science) on which this study draws. Liminality was then touched upon as a permanent, portable and protracted condition, experienced somatically and affectively by borderlanders during the European refugee 'crisis', in ways that defy the classic conceptualisation of linearly-progressing rites of passage, as not only border crossers but all kinds of borderlands find themselves locked in both spatially as well as affectively.

Overall, this chapter highlighted the importance of engaging with experiential and embodied aspects of liminal spaces, and the mercurial nature of borderscapes in the affectively supercharged and combustible current sociopolitical context of border and migration affairs, underlining the significance of studies such as the present one.

4. METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND MATERIAL

Introduction

Following the previous chapters that delineated the emergence of this research, its focus, and the way it is positioned within the broader theoretical context it is embedded within, this chapter will proceed to present an overview of its methodology and methods, as well as the processes of material selection and analysis. How can we access something as elusive and persistently hidden in plain sight as affect is? This fundamental question emerged as soon as the decision to inquire the nature of affective borderscapes was taken. What kinds of questions – if any – would I need to ask other people and myself in this direction, and what methods could be implemented so to approach people's deeply personal experiences of affective engagement with borders?

The chapter's first section touches upon the guiding research philosophy, grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology, and the multi-sited ethnographic approach that was followed. In the second section the data collection phase is described: Firstly, the selection of methods is presented, followed by the explanation and illustration of how they have been implemented in the discrete studies that comprise this thesis. Secondly, the multiple locations, research participants, and types of material included are delineated. The third subsection describes the process of data reduction and analysis. The concluding third section details issues of ethics, reflexivity and positionality that emerge while carrying out a research project of such sensitive nature, with a diverse set of people, most of whom find themselves in precarious positions. This chapter closes with an analysis of this project's methodological contributions and limitations.

Research philosophy and methodological approach

This research is ontologically rooted in constructivism while drawing on an interpretivist epistemology that adheres to a hermeneutic-phenomenological theoretical perspective. A constructivist ontology in affect and emotions studies prescribes that affects are culturally constructed and constituted and should thereby not be considered as universal phenomena among humans: even the bodily perturbations associated with affects should be regarded as experienced in socio-culturally determined ways that impact both their content and valence (Tarlow, 2012, p. 170). The emphasis this study places on people's written and oral narratives prompted the adherence to an interpretivist epistemology, which focuses 'on people's perceptions of the world in which they live in and what it means to them: a focus on people's lived experience' understood through the subjective stories they tell of them (Langdridge, 2007, p. 4).

The challenges posed to the development of methodologies that could identify and analyse affective processes in relation to certain empirical contexts of social life (Knudsen and Stage, 2015, pp. 1–2) led to the combination of insights from both ethnography and hermeneutic/interpretive phenomenology as it was developed in the work of philosophers such as Heidegger (1993, 1996), Gadamer (1976), and Ricoeur (1975, 2016). This multidimensional approach derived from the ontological and epistemological foundations of the study, its exploratory approach, and its specific questions and objectives that seek to uncover affect's entanglement with broader cultural and political forces and its role in shaping socio-spatial relations through the individual narratives of a variety of actors. From this, a combination of methodological approaches emerged.

Ethnography, as an 'iterative–inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on a family of methods that acknowledges the role of theory as well as the researcher's own role and that views humans as part object/part subject' (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 3) has the capacity to elicit the perspectives and experiences of marginalized populations in social precariousness, and to compose densely descriptive and textured interpretive representations of their

everyday life (Bryman, 2001; Gilbert Brown and Dobrin, 2004). As such, it is an exemplary methodology for the observation of migration, urbanity, borders and border crossings diachronically³⁴. In the current historical moment, faced with the challenges posed by the reinforcement of border controls, the shifts to ever more deadly pathways and patterns of irregular migration, as well as the reconfiguration and strengthening of policy responses to them, the role of ethnography in exploring and analysing these processes and in sensitising policymakers and publics is even more crucial (Willen, 2007, p. 10).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the structure of human consciousness and various types of lived experience ‘ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity’ (Smith, 2013, para. 7). In this view, the experiences of linguistically- and socioculturally situated people are approached through the interpretation of not only textual narratives, such as interview transcriptions, fieldnotes and diaries (Moustakas, 1994; Bloor and Wood, 2006), but also of artistic and aesthetic representations as expressions of life, such as documentary and visual methods (Bloor and Wood, 2006; Pink, 2011b; CohenMiller, 2018), as well as of experiences of landscapes and materialities (Tilley, 1994, 2004).

As multiple narratives and observations are embraced (Finlay, 2009a) into joint meaning-making, often overlooked details and trivial aspects of people’s feelings, thoughts and experiences are illuminated (Wilson and Hutchinson, 1991). Moreover, this approach includes and validates the totality of the lived experience not just of the research participants themselves but also of the researcher (Finlay, 2009b) who is recognised as being reflexively involved in a

³⁴ Ethnography has played a central role in the study of these processes ever since the Chicago School’s pioneering studies on the arrival and settlement of European migrants in the ‘slums’ and ‘ghettos’ of American cities (for example, Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918; Whyte, 1943; Wirth, 1969) and continues to do so on present-day facets of similar phenomena internationally (see, for example, Grimes, 1998; Khosravi, 2007; Lucht, 2012; Shapira, 2013; Andersson, 2014; De León, 2015; Nájera, 2015; Tang, 2015; Besteman, 2016, among many others).

process of sensemaking: simultaneously an interpreter of those encounters and a producer of new material for further interpretation through her writings and various expressions of her experiences (Engelsrud, 2005).

Phenomenological studies of borders and borderlands from a geographical perspective are sparse, with a few notable exceptions, such as the work by Correa-Cabrera and Garrett (2014), De León (2015), and Portús, Vicente and Vidaurre (2016). However, this approach has been undertaken more widely within ‘liminal situations’ in other contexts and disciplines, such as anthropological studies of homelessness (Desjarlais, 1997), illegality (Willen, 2007), undocumentedness (Sigvardsdotter, 2012), euthanasia (Leget, 2006), and urban encounters in liminal spaces (Frers, 2007), among others.

Following this methodological orientation, a variety of qualitative data collection methods, such as participant observation, the use of extensive fieldnotes, un/semi-structured interviews, migration journals, collaborative mental mapping, photography, video, and object

Figure 6: Schematic overview of the philosophical and methodological foundations of this study.

analysis, which will be detailed in the upcoming sections of this chapter, were employed in a complementary manner to approach the participants' experiences and meaning-making processes. The overall framework is summarised in Figure 6 on the previous page.

Data collection

Definition and selection of multi-sited ethnographic cases

This study is an ethnography of affective borderscapes focussing on the EU borders across the eastern Mediterranean. The locations and processes that were included in this research were identified and selected through first-hand observation of research participants' interactions with social and physical/material environments around borders or based on their narratives of past experiences. As already elaborated in the Prologue, this study began with a different focus. Its research design was, therefore, continuously adapted in an iterative manner as the project advanced to better reflect issues that emerged as featuring more prominently in the research participants' lives, such as their encounters with- and negotiations of borders.

Research participants include a variety of socially and temporally situated actors: (irregular) migrants and refugees, as well as other borderlanders, such as border/coast guards, police officers, local residents, rescuers, activists and volunteers. The study is comprised of several smaller-scale exploratory (hypothesis seeking) case studies undertaken in different locations, with different sets of actors, at different times, based on a diverse case selection method (Gerring, 2004; Seawright and Gerring, 2008, pp. 300–301). By opting for the diverse case selection method, I aimed to achieve maximum variance along dimensions relevant to the study's research question, such as the range and effects of sociospatial interactions and affective expressions of migrants and/or other actors at different locations and time periods.

To address different borderscape perspectives, therefore, empirical material was collected over an extensive period of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork (Marcus, 1995). Multi-sited ethnography advocates 'following' several aspects constituting one's field around, in

order to grasp a complex cultural phenomenon whose ‘baseline conceptual identity... turns out to be contingent and malleable as one traces it’ (Marcus, 1995, p. 106) within the different settings in which it manifests. Markus’ methodological outline also advocates approaches that follow ‘people (especially migrants), the thing (commodities, gifts, money, works of art, and intellectual property), the metaphor (including signs and symbols or images), the plot, story or allegory (narratives of everyday experience or memory), the life or biography (of exemplary individuals), or the conflict (issues contested in public space)’ (Vertovec, 2001, p. 457), which encompasses most of the approaches undertaken in this study.

During fieldwork, therefore, the affective dimensions of bordering were explored ‘across and within multiple sites of activity’ (Marcus, 1995, p. 96) and were traced with the use of methods ‘designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations’ (ibid, p. 105). Although fieldwork was initiated in Athens, migrant journeys were followed onwards and backwards in time and space through the participants’ retrospective border narratives and my visits to those sites, if possible. Following Marcus’ above-quoted multidimensional approach, aside from the pursuit of people and places, as this research advanced I also tracked the things, images and metaphors implicated in borders and migration, along with the migrants’ own stories and mobilities, as well as the conflicts and contestations expressed in public spaces around those issues.

As indicated in the Prologue, fieldwork was set off in the neighbourhood of Kypseli in Athens, the area around Amerikís square in particular, which has been shown to be a central hub of temporary migrant transit and settlement. In the context of this study, central Athens has served as an ideal case study of a multiply fractured urban borderland, as detailed in this thesis’ first paper.

Lesvos, and the islands of eastern Aegean along the Greek-Turkish border narratively emerged as main entry points into Greece/EU, since the early 2000s. What these narratives, and the later-retrieved textual and material traces from migrant detention centers, burial sites and public spaces around Lesvos empirically revealed was the

Map 3: Multi-sited ethnography fieldwork locations. Map by the author.

diachronic nature of migratory pathways in the area. The routes followed by contemporary migrants and refugees caught up in the recent ‘EU migration crisis’ had been paved by migrants preceding them by almost two decades, if not a century or more ago³⁵, and the systems that facilitated and accommodated such movements had been long in existence, despite inter/national authorities’ efforts to ignore or conceal their presence. A visualisation of the primary, secondary and tertiary locations of the multi-sited fieldwork is offered

³⁵ For a brief historical perspective on the centuries-old pathways of forced migration in multiple directions through the north/eastern Aegean islands, see Papers 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

Map 4: Map of fieldwork locations on Lesbos. Map by the author.

on Map 3 on the previous page, as well as on Map 1 on the opening pages of this dissertation.

In the second, third and fourth paper of this thesis, Lesbos was examined both at a macro and meso level as a case of politically disputed maritime borders that have been major points of entry into Greece and the EU, with the subsequent sociopolitical contestations this generates. Additionally, the micro borders inscribed across the island's geography, in public spaces and beyond, as well as the affective resonances of the human and material encounters transpiring on the island were addressed. The key locations visited on Lesbos throughout the duration of this research are indicated on Map 4 above.

Secondary and tertiary locations where fieldwork has been undertaken to gain further insights on the processes under study, but which have

not been analysed in depth in the compiled publications, completed the observations of irregular migration in the region³⁶. A two-week long visit to the Turkish city of Izmir took place in the summer of 2015, supplementing observations collected at the coastal town of Ayvalik, which was briefly visited in the summer of 2013. A couple of short visits to Istanbul rounded up my impressions from the Turkish side of the Greek/EU border. The Greek cities of Pátras and Thessaloniki and the towns of Heráklion and Idoméni were visited at different times to report on the lives and journeys on migrants in Greece (Daley, 2014; Tsoni and Pantelia, 2014), as well as while following the outbound journeys of research participants. Brief visits to other European cities, or Greek towns where the people I had met in Athens between 2012-13 had re-located, also followed in the coming years³⁷.

The variety of locations, scales, social groups and interactions under observation followed the diverse case selection logic and aimed to approach holistically the different transit spaces and stages of irregular migration in the region (entry and stay in Greece, and exit from Greece towards neighbouring countries), as well as the means of transportation migrants utilised (over land, water and air). Land borders were explored along the Greek – North Macedonian border (traversed by the people leaving Greece on foot), which was visited in the summer of 2012, while accompanying a group of outgoing African men, long before the popularity of the ‘Balkan route’ exploded in 2015 (Tošić, 2017). Observations of ‘aerial borders’ occurred at the airport of Athens ‘Eleftherios Venizelos’ and a few other regional airports (such as Mykonos and Heráklion) from where some respondents attempted to fly towards other European countries using counterfeit documents. Sea borders were encountered in the majority of migrant arrival narratives as well as my own visits and engagement with local life in the towns of Pátras, Mytiléne and Mólyvos in Lesvos, as well as in Ayvalik and Izmir in Turkey.

³⁶ See Map 3, which indicates the locations of multi-sited fieldwork on p. 73, as well as the map and list of locations mentioned in this thesis on p. ix.

³⁷ Additional locations of minor importance that were visited in the context of this research for shorter periods of time can be found on the research timeline featured in Figure 7 on p. 77.

Figure 7 on the following page summarizes the points made above, and illustrates the research progression from the project's exploratory onset in 2012 all through the Ph.D. program's duration from 2013 to 2018 with regard to the stages and locations of its fieldwork (online and on the ground), as well as the temporal correspondence of major Ph.D. milestones, especially with regard to publication output. Online fieldwork (indicated as a grey half-circle in the first column) has taken place throughout the project. The circles in the second column denote different fieldwork locations (yellow for Athens, red for Lesvos, and blue for secondary locations such as Thessaloniki, Idoméni, Amsterdam, Ayvalik, Pátras, Istanbul, Paris, Izmir and Brussels) and their size is relative to the duration of the visits.

Sampling

Sampling was based on a multi-stage, cluster-specific, non-probability selection of participants. In practice, this means that during the initial research stages I consulted a limited convenience sample of respondents, approached through chance encounters within the area of geographic interest. Later, this group was expanded through additional purposive 'snowball' sampling, which facilitates identifying other potential participants through past participants' existing networks (Bradshaw and Stratford, 2000; Robson, 2002). However, as the project's scope gradually narrowed down, and the initial group of respondents underwent a process of mutual selection, sampling in the final stages of fieldwork gradually became more targeted.

The majority of the initial research participants were French-speaking West African migrants, selected irrespective of their age, nationality, gender, time of entry into Greece, or life trajectories. Access was obtained either through unmediated contact, or through introduction by community gatekeepers, such as long-term migrants, shop owners, human smugglers or common acquaintances, something that established higher levels of trust between us from the start. An exceptional degree of access to the participants' daily lives resulted from my long-term presence and in-depth engagement in the neighbourhood. Later on, due to the changing circumstances within

Figure 7: Research timeline 2012-2018. Column A: Online fieldwork duration. Column B: Location and duration of fieldwork visits. Column C: Major PhD milestones. Infographic by the author.

the research area, which was caused by the advent of the refugee ‘crisis’, the experiences of individuals from other countries, such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iran, were also taken into consideration.

Obtaining formal research permits by the authorities, such as the police and the coastguard, was subject to considerable delays and access restrictions. Therefore, informal contact was established with a small number of respondents working for those authorities under the condition of anonymity. They were either introduced to me by common acquaintances or I would approach them directly. This includes the captain and some crew members of a Hellenic Coastguard frigate; a former navy seal and two pilots of military helicopters who had participated in search and rescue operations in the Aegean; one policeman at a police station in central Athens; one policeman at the refugee Reception and Identification Center of Mória, and members of the Hellenic Rescue Team in Lesvos. A similarly open-ended approach to sampling was maintained towards other border actors, such as local residents, volunteers, activists and others. A list of the main research participants and interlocutors is presented in Appendix II on p. 172.

Regarding participants’ consent to contribute to this study, no formal consent was sought prior to being admitted to the PhD programme at Malmö University. A mutual understanding was established at the onset of my acquaintance with each research participant individually regarding my general academic interest in the topics I specifically inquired on, and assurances of anonymity, confidentiality and accuracy were offered in case any of this material would ever be published in the future. After my admission to the Ph.D. programme, I created a consent form³⁸, which, however, was not received by the research participants as positively as I would have anticipated. Instead, it was greeted as rather unnecessary, and when I would suggest that they could fill it in, reactions such the following occurred: ‘we know you long enough to trust you anyways, what difference does a signature make?’; ‘this is too long to read, no need for paperwork between us’, and ‘if you choose to lie and write other

³⁸ See the Participant Consent Form in Appendix I on p. 171.

things no signed paper can change this'. Eventually, my efforts to obtain signed consent forms gradually dwindled and, instead, more focus was placed on deepening the existing rapport and trust with my respondents.

To protect participant's anonymity and maintain the confidentiality of any shared information, aside from the already mentioned precautions that were taken throughout the fieldwork period, participants' names have been substituted by pseudonyms throughout this text, and their biographical information has been slightly altered to ensure external, as well as internal confidentiality (Tolich, 2004; Kaiser, 2009).

Data sources, types and forms

The elusiveness of the objects of inquiry, namely borders, borderscapes and affects, as well as the large number of participants and their diverse background necessitated a multifaceted approach to data collection. The study is based on primary qualitative data (textual, visual and material objects), collected through a range of qualitative methods designed to provide in-depth understanding of the participants' subjective, lived experiences and perspectives related to a certain phenomenon or event, true to the phenomenological approach.³⁹ This material was supplemented with secondary data in the form of academic and popular (including media) publications, as well as tertiary data in the form of statistics, maps, dictionaries and timelines⁴⁰ compiled by others.

Primary material was collected through a combination of 'classic' qualitative/ethnographic methods with a strong emphasis on narrative methods, which are most commonly used in phenomenology. As a result, a broad dataset was collected, consisting of material derived from methods ranging from participant observation, informal

³⁹ Summarised in Figure 6 on p. 70 and elaborated upon in the upcoming section on the methods of data collection on p. 80.

⁴⁰ Timelines refer to compiled data regarding the development of the refugee crisis and EU's change of border policy attitudes such as in Fry (2015) and the *Timeline of European migration events, 2004-present* (2019).

and unstructured interviews, oral and written life-history narratives, and recording of fieldnotes (Spradley, 1980; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). To elicit the participants' unanticipated reflections on the phenomena and experiences under study, the narratively-derived material was combined and supplemented with insights derived from creative and participatory methods. Those methods included migrant journal-keeping, material object analysis, digital ethnography, and visual methods, such as participatory spatial drawings and mental mapping, photography, and video-making (Hine, 2000; Hébert, Lee and Sun, 2003; Darbyshire, MacDougall and Schiller, 2005; Hogan, Carrasco and Wellman, 2007; Maman *et al.*, 2009; Pink, 2009, 2013, 2016; Kozinets, 2010; Middleton, 2010), undertaken in a reflexive manner (Davies, 1999). In addition to data derived from ethnographic observations and people's first-person accounts, as is often the case in narrative inquiries, a large number of participants offered secondary accounts of other people's activities, attitudes, perceptions, values and motives, or expressed opinions on overarching social processes and institutional practices relevant to the research.

Methods of data collection

Border narratives

In this research border narratives are understood as selective personal accounts that communicate the reflections of migrants and other borderlanders on the effects of encountering multi-layered borders in their daily lives, and the border-induced affects invoked by those experiences. They are testimonies of mobility and fixity; stories of how newcomers got 'here' and why, and what set them on their journey in the first place. They are also accounts filtered through the registers of the receiving communities and individuals who dwell along or defend the borders and boundaries that migrants defy.

Narrativisation, the presentation or interpretation of experiences, events, etc. in the form of a narrative, is a mode of oral and written expression that can help the narrators themselves, as well as their audiences, create order and structure in their lifeworlds, especially

Image 7: Sharing a bowl of 'mafaï hako bantara' with a group of migrants from Guinea-Conakry in an appartment near Plateía Amerikís. Image by the author (2014).

around critical or traumatic incidents in their lives (Cortazzi, 2007). Through the narrative representation of a lived reality, meaning is conferred onto past experiences, while present and future personal and collective identities are established and reinforced beyond any pre-existing frames of social and cultural discourse (Prokkola, 2009, 2014).

Remaining attentive to people's narratives allows the listener, within and beyond a research context, to gain a rich and multi-layered knowledge about their lived experiences. In the case of the study's participants, their stories helped me gain a fine-grained understanding of the meaning of borders and migration in their lives and of the transformation of their identities while dwelling in mobility and being caught in a process of protracted liminality.

Their experiences and perspectives were reflexively juxtaposed to my own, which were also openly shared with most of the participants, as we all engaged in a process of mutual meaning-making. This helped strengthen a sense of experiential commonality, if not community, between us.

In the words of Clandinin and Rosiek:

‘Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another’s assistance in building lives and communities.’ (2007, p. 35).

Hanging out at park benches, walking aimlessly for hours, jumping school fences to play or watch football afterhours, gathering around a communal plate of *granat* or *ogbono* soup and *fufu*⁴¹, were among the many occasions when the migrants and I shared our stories⁴². Together we tried to make sense of the elusive meanings of the *adventure*⁴³ of migration; of the fragmented metropolis we felt trapped by; of what ‘home’ meant to each of us and where – and if – it ever was; of who we were, and who our journeys had made of us; of where our destiny, or our destination, laid.

Accessing others’ experiences is challenging (if at all possible), therefore, remaining attentive not just to a dialogue’s or an account’s verbatim content, but also to supplementary communicative and sensory elements is very important. Such elements are gestures, body

⁴¹ Typical dishes from different West African countries with considerable variation in their ingredients and names. Granat: Chicken and ground peanut dish common in Guinea-Conakry and Sierra Leone. Ogbono: Nigerian dish made with ogbono seeds, palm oil, leaf vegetables and meat. Fufu: Staple food throughout West and Central Africa made by boiling and fermenting starchy root vegetables such as cassava or yam, and pounding them into thick, paste-like porridge.

⁴² See Image 7 on p. 81.

⁴³ Migrants from the former French colonies, who were among the first participants of this research, systematically referred to migration as ‘adventure’ (aventure) and to themselves as ‘travellers’ (voyageurs) or ‘adventurers’ (aventuriers), as mentioned also in Paper 1 as well as in Chapter three of this dissertation.

language, facial expressions, speech tempo, voice tonality and silences, among others. Embracing those auxiliary conversational details can (re)construct the richness of intimate affective realities (Moran, 2013, p. 185) closely tied to the ‘three commonplaces of narrative inquiry – temporality, sociality, and place – which specify dimensions of an inquiry space’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 479), thereby recreating past aspects and emergent angles of affective geographies within the boundaries of the shared narrative space between the researcher, the researched, and the reader.

Between 2012 and 2018, numerous conversations and informal interviews were conducted with migrants of various backgrounds, and with individuals who lived or worked in areas affected by migrant passage. These conversations took place in shops and street corners, public squares and people’s homes, tents, abandoned factories, cheap restaurants and cafes and countless other places. The migrants’ nationalities ranged depending on the research location and fieldwork period. Western Africans encountered in Athens originated from countries like Guinea-Conakry, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Congo, and Angola. A few Afghans and Iranians, also living in Athens, were approached prior to the advent of the 2015 ‘refugee crisis’. After the onset of the ‘crisis’, as the spatial focus of the research shifted to Lesbos, the majority of the people I came across were Syrians, Kurds and Iraqis. Most of other border actors – such as locals, authorities and volunteers – were of Greek and Northern European/American descent, while the human smuggling facilitators came from various backgrounds (Pakistanis, Egyptians, Turks, Burkinabés, Gambians and Albanians).

Typically, narratives would be initiated spontaneously, as part of a general conversation, or they were triggered by a certain memory, object or event and were then further pursued. This occurred both in group gatherings, whereupon others would also ‘jump in’ and share their stories, or during personal meetings. Group discussions offered a broader perspective on people’s experiences, but the privacy and confidentiality of personal conversations facilitated in-depth storytelling and the recollection and sharing of intimate and

affective details. All conversations and informal interviews were carried out in English, Greek, or French, and recordings were only made when a considerable degree of familiarity was established with certain long-term participants. Usually, a day's conversations were transcribed from memory into extensive fieldnotes at its end with the help of memo notes, supplementing any omitted details later.

Narratively-grounded scholarship is often considered controversial, since it challenges the prevalent research evaluation frameworks that assess a study's generalisability, reliability, and replicability. In the process of interpreting and integrating the numerous subjective narratives comprising this research, the narrative truth criteria of trustworthiness, honesty, plausibility, situatedness, introspectiveness/self-reflection and universalizability (Nash, 2004, p. 38), along with Bruner's truth criteria of coherence, livability, and adequacy (2002, p. 5), acted as guidelines in bringing out the integral validity and value of the participants' perspectives.

Within border studies, Doevenspeck (2011), following the seminal work of Paasi (1996), has argued that political borders can be simultaneously subverted and perpetuated through narratives originating 'from below'. Therefore, approaching the border narratively allows for its 'historicity, relationality and contrariness' (Doevenspeck, 2011, p. 140) to unfold, while also providing 'insights into state-society relations ... and an understanding of the effects of the border as a social construction that influences everyday life' (ibid, p. 129).

From mobile field to mobile methodologies

The unpredictable and increasingly complex patterns of spatial mobility of this study's participants and of the researcher herself after most of us had left Athens posed methodological challenges that needed to be urgently addressed so that systematic communication and field updates could be maintained for the remainder of this project. The additional demands placed on ethnographers dwelling in, and moving through complex field sites, while coming into contact

with voluntarily or forcibly im/mobile people, had already been noted by Clifford who had observed that:

[the ethnographer's] field-site opens onto complex histories of dwelling and travelling... Fieldwork is less a matter of localized dwelling and more a series of travel encounters. Everyone's on the move, and has been for centuries: dwelling-in-travel... a view of human location as constituted by displacement as much as stasis (1997, p. 2).

These dis/re/locations and movements challenge conceptualizations of the research field as a static, and clearly bounded area that the researcher could enter and exit from unproblematically and unreflexively. Instead, the research field was now anchored on mobile bodies and became itinerant in itself, necessitating methodological approaches that could efficiently trace such flows, while being able to incorporate the multiplicity of research sites and subjects, and their complex mobility patterns, rather than assume their fixity and rootedness.

Following the 'mobility turn' in the social sciences, mobile methods (Urry, 2007; Büscher and Urry, 2009; Fincham, McGuinness and Murray, 2010; Cresswell, 2012; DeLyser and Sui, 2013; Spinney, 2015) emerged as a set of methods that 'are very useful in recognizing migrant subjectivities as always on the move, always changing, and always shifting within, among, and between various locations and spaces' (Keller, 2004, p. 207). These methods facilitated the empirical tracing of participants' experiences across such a temporally and geographically fragmented field. As it is indicated both in this chapter, as well as throughout the individual papers of this dissertation, the range of mobile methods utilised resonated with Sheller's description, which included:

... interactional and conversational analysis of people as they moved ... itinerant movement with people, following objects, and co-present immersion in various modes of movement; after the fact interviews and focus groups about mobility; the keeping of textual, pictorial or digital time-space diaries; various methods

of cyber-research, cyber-ethnography ... imaginative travel using multimedia methods attentive to the affective and atmospheric feeling of place; the tracking of affective objects that attach memories to place and circulate in 'sticky' ways; and finally methods that measure the spatial structuring and temporal pulse of transfer points and places of in-between-ness in which the circulation of people and objects are slowed or stopped, as well as facilitated and speeded. (2010, p. vii)

Research methods that are 'on the move', as argued by Law & Urry (2004) open up possibilities to explore the complexity of migrants' lives, elucidating the sensory, emotional, affective and kinaesthetic aspects of their 'alternative' and 'off-grid' mobilities (Vannini, 2009; Vannini and Taggart, 2012). As such, they facilitate the collection of migrants' experiences of material and immaterial border-crossings and the composition of thick descriptions of their condition of liminality and irregularity, as borders remain nestled into their bodies long after their cartographic demarcations have been crossed.

Mobile methods can also help 'unsituate' the subject in migration, not in the hope that we will stop looking at subject positions entirely, but so that we can, instead, use ethnographic practices and other qualitative methods to better recognize migrant subjectivities as always on the move, always changing, and always shifting within, among, and between various locations and spaces (Keller, 2004, p. 207). The combination of such methods in the context of a multi-sited and phenomenologically-informed ethnographic research brings forth the emerging genre of mobile ethnography (Cresswell, 2012) and the im/mobile biographies, identities and lifestyles it strives to depict, while researchers and participants mutually construct the field through their interactions and modes of conducting and responding to fieldwork (Ross *et al.*, 2009).

Digital ethnography

Digital ethnography (Murthy, 2008; Pink *et al.*, 2016; Hjorth *et al.*, 2017) and 'netnography' (Kozinets, 2010, 2013) are specialized

forms of ethnography adapted to the computer-mediated contingencies of today's social world. They are vast and quickly emerging fields, with many epistemological and methodological complexities, as well as ethical concerns that still remain academically underexplored⁴⁴. Digital ethnography was mainly implemented through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as WhatsApp, Viber and Messenger; interaction over social networking sites, where ample multimedia material regarding even the most marginal aspects of the researched topics was readily available (primarily Facebook, due to its widespread use and minimal digital literacy skills required for its access), as well as consulting special interest groups and pages, or contributing to different websites and blogs. Material deriving from online ethnography was screen-capped, timestamped and categorized according to its thematic scope and source.

Despite the limitations and challenges⁴⁵ posed by digital methods (Pink, 2011a), the use of digital ethnography has contributed greatly to this research by enhancing and sustaining access to remote field sites and participants; levelling power imbalances⁴⁶ between the researcher and the researched – even if relatively; facilitating ‘following’ research contributors throughout their migration trajectories over many years; incorporating research flexibly into the daily lives of everyone involved; enabling unmediated access to potential par-

⁴⁴ Digital ethnography involves mediated (as opposed to direct), sustained and open-ended contact with people, within the context of their daily lives and cultures through multiple, digital and non-digital-centered methods in reflexive, and often unorthodox, modes of engagement (Pink *et al.*, 2016, pp. 8–14), while netnography tends to follow the online communications and interactions of social groups, or special interest groups in order to find the emotional story behind a subject (Kozinets, 2010, 2013).

⁴⁵ Challenges include, among others, issues regarding participants' consent, research's c/overtness, the delimitation of fieldwork settings, the impact of digital communication on the evolution of research relationships, as well as the persistent stratification of participants' access to technology, based on class, gender, educational level etc.

⁴⁶ One such power imbalance commonly encountered in qualitative research, which I have variously tried to revert during the research process, relates to the process of communication initiation as a privilege often exclusively reserved by researchers, who are primarily the ones to choose when to enter and exit the field, as well as how- and for how long to remain in touch with their participants, while the same freedom is not granted equally to participants.

ticipants or research-related contexts; as well as disseminating research results to the general public, as well as to participants, with the aim of keeping this project accountable throughout its duration.

Migration journals

Another mobile method, albeit more low-tech, hands-on and analogue than those previously mentioned, were the ‘migration journals’ completed by some participants at the onset of fieldwork. The idea came up during a conversation with a group of migrants in December 2012, during the time I prepared to leave Athens for Malmö while they planned their travels further north into Europe. We were discussing how we would keep in touch when our roads would part, and journal keeping was suggested as a way to keep our interrupted conversations going and create intimate – even if geographically and temporally dispersed – spaces of sharing and meaning-making of their previously undocumented personal stories.

Like every method, this, too, had its limitations. As participants had varying levels of command of different languages and dialects, the issue of journal-keeping language arose. The proposed solution was for them to write in whichever language each felt comfortable to express in, even if in their own dialect, and I would find ways to translate their texts later. Secondly, participants also differed in their levels of literacy. Inevitably, those who were functionally illiterate had to be excluded from this part of the project, while those who had formal education produced more elaborate texts that ended up featuring more prominently in this work. Thirdly, the completed journals’ return rate was below expectations, despite prior careful planning. Many journals got lost, although I had included pre-addressed and stamped envelopes so they could be simply dropped in a postal box whenever one considered them complete. Participants preferred to leave their completed notebooks with their friends in Athens when they departed, with the intention of having their friends return them to me in person, as they considered this hand-to-hand method safer than simply mailing them. Regrettably, this solution did not work, and all such journals got lost, while all mailed envelopes were successfully received.

Special consideration was paid to the possibility of migrants risking being arrested in possession of their journals and the authorities going through them, looking for incriminating information on unauthorized travelling and other aspects of their daily life. To address this issue, the researcher was listed as the journal's owner inside its cover, along with her contact information, and participants were advised to only use pseudonyms for themselves and others in their texts, and to avoid including any identifying information.

Insights from one of the journals featured as the centrepiece of Paper 1 of this compilation in an effort to strongly highlight the border- and boundary-crossing experience of irregular sub-Saharan African migrants in crisis-ridden Greece.

As it has been previously affirmed it is important to attend to the power and immediacy of listening directly and empathetically to the voices of migrants themselves through their individual testimonies and include them intact in academic texts (King, Iosifides and Myrivili, 1998). Doing so has the capacity to convey the density and emotional power of their experiences in a manner that no amount of scholarly translation by the researcher ever could.

To further illustrate this point and the rich results this method can yield, an extended excerpt from the migration journal of 25-year-old Oumar from Guinea describing his passage from Turkey to Greece is featured in the upcoming pages, followed by the transcription of the French text and its translation in English on pages 90-92.

Walking and psychogeographic insights

Research for this project was undertaken in a state of almost constant mobility. Carrying out psychogeographic research while walking – either by myself or with research participants – played a central role in exploring fieldwork settings and experiencing their flow, rhythms and spatially-induced affects (Wunderlich, 2008; Edensor, 2010; Middleton, 2010). Psychogeography, as defined by Guy Debord, studies specific effects of the geographical and material

'Hoi j'avais prit la décision et rien ne pouvait me changer d'avis. Donc j'ai rencontré un Kirde qui faisait traverser les gens ^{vers} ~~pour~~ la Grèce il me dit 650 dollars après des négociations il a laissé 500 dollars et je suis venu celui le matin au début j'étais seul mais dans la soirée les gens ont commencé à venir il nous a donné les tickets de bus ~~pour ISMUR~~ une fois arrivés là-bas une autre personne est venue à notre rencontre et qui nous a hébergé dans une maison et de l'attendre. Vers 3 heures du matin il est revenu avec une personne qui nous a prié dans un mini bus fermé de couleur blanche après une heure le bus nous sommes descendu ~~pour prendre~~

~~la route de~~ et là-bas une autre per-
sonne nous ~~était~~ attendais qui
devrais nous faire traverser. Avec
cette dernière nous avons marcher
presque tout le reste de la nuit
arriver à un endroit il fallait
passer la ~~nuit~~ ^{journée} là-bas. Après une
longue journée ~~tard~~ la nuit
nous sommes partir vers la
rivière il a fait sortir une
~~très~~ chose qui a prit la forme
d'un pirogue et sommes monté
dessus sur la dessus quelque
chose de 30 minute nous avons
traverser avant qu'on monte il
nous ai dit une fois traverser
de continuer devant qu'après
nous allons voir une grande route
donc après avoir traverser nous
avons continuer le chemin en-
core de route nous avons vit une
camionnette et nous nous cacher

Table 1: Oumar's migration journal transcription and translation

Original Text: Moi j'avais prit la décision et rien ne pouvait me changer d'avis. Donc j'ai donc rencontré un Kurde qui faisait traverser les gens vers la Grèce. Il m'a dit 650\$. Après négociations, il a laisser 500\$ et je suis venu celui le matin. Au début j'étais seul, mais dans la soirée les gens ont commencé à venir. Il nous a donné les tickets de bus ~~pour ISMUR~~. Une fois arrivés là bas une autre personne est venue à notre rencontre et nous a héberger dans une maison et de l' attendre. Vers 3 heure du matin il est revenu avec une personne qui nous ai prient dans un minibus fermé de couleur blanche. Après une heure de bus, nous sommes descendu ~~pour prendre la route de~~ et laba une autre personne nous attendais qui devrais nous faire traverser. Avec cette dernière nous avons marché presque tous le reste de la nuit. Arrivés à un endroit il fallait passer la ~~nuit~~ journée laba. Après une longue journée, tard la nuit, nous sommes partir vers la rivière. Il a fait sortir quelque chose qui a pris la forme d'une pirogue et somme monté ~~dedans~~ sur la dessus. Quelque chose de 30 minutes. Nous avons traverser avant qu'on monte, il nous a dit qu'une foit traverser de continuer devant qu' apres nous allos voir une grande route donc apres avoir traverser nous avons continuer le chemin en-cour de route nous avos vit une camionnete et nous nous cacher.

English translation: I had made my decision and nothing could change my mind. So I met a Kurd who was helping people cross to Greece. He told me it's \$650. After negotiations, he let it be \$500 and I came in the morning. At first I was alone, but in the evening people started coming. He gave us the bus tickets ~~to Izmir~~. Once there, another person came to meet us and hosted us in a house while waiting. Around 3am he came back with another person who took us in a closed white van. After an hour of bus, we got off ~~to take the road~~ and over there someone else was waiting for us who had to take us through. With that last one we walked almost all of the night. When we arrived at a place we had to spend the ~~night~~ day there. After a long day, late at night, we went to the river. He took out something that proved to be a boat and we climbed ~~inside~~ from the top. In about 30 minutes we had crossed. Before we went in the boat, he told us that once we would cross, we had to walk straight ahead and afterwards we were going to see a big road. After crossing, we continued on the way. Along the way, we saw a van and we hid told us that once we would cross, we had to walk straight ahead and afterwards we were going to see a big road. After crossing, we continued on the way. Along the way, we saw a van and we hid.

environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals (2008, p. 23). This experimental process uses the body as a data collection device in itself and observes its entanglement with the ambiances and the unpredictable situations it gets exposed to while rapidly passing through- and getting dis/re/oriented within, primarily urban, physical and sociocultural environments (Debord, 1956, 2008).

Psychogeography, as a way of delving into the soul of a city, is particularly attentive to spatial ‘ambiances’: affects, senses and moods that are associated with specific places, and to the character, tone, and appeal they might have. Urban landscapes are splintered into small clusters of such localised ambiances, which individuals encounter individually or collectively through the practice of ‘dérive’ [literally: drifting], which requires a ‘playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects’ (Debord, 1956, para. 1). Exploring these ‘units of spatial ambiance’ across territorial borders as well as within cities by aimlessly and randomly wandering through a place, guided by whim, desire, spatial clues and an awareness of how different spaces may draw you in or repel you (Debord, 1956, para. 2) opened up familiar spaces for an interrogation of conventional perceptions regarding their coordinates, constitution, history, sociality and affectivity. This way of following spatial stories ‘from below’, or from what De Certeau (1984) refers to as a ‘street level perspective’, has been used extensively in this work for the affective tracing of borders.

Through a process of drifting akin to Debord’s ‘dérive’, therefore, the invisible urban borders of Athens were discovered through walking. Similarly, inconspicuous visual material and physical objects around which some of this thesis’ publications revolved were collected from public spaces: the graffiti from Mytiléne’s townscape and detention centers, as well as the refugee flotsam and jetsam scattered across the northern shores of Lesbos.

While trying to keep up with the walking pace of undocumented migrants, my body was forcefully adjusted to its surroundings and registered the physical sensations they generated (feeling hot, cold,

Image 9: Sitting with a group of Congolese and Angolan migrants on a bench at Plateía Kalligá. Image by a research participant (2014).

hungry, tired, thirsty, disoriented, needing to rest or use a restroom but being unable to, feeling afraid, relaxed, or anxious). These physical experiences helped grasp as closely as possible, even if still by proxy, the embodied dimensions of life in conditions of forced mobility faced by research participants, whose bodies (black, male, undocumented) stood out harshly among the urban crowds and experienced the same space in ways often diametrically different than me.

For people who lacked even the smallest of personal spaces, a paradoxical sense of privacy could be only achieved through such walkabouts, by carving a mobile private space in public. Across downtown streets, on park benches and in the shade of apartment block entrances, slivers of privacy emerged in public space through our wandering and momentary repose, as illustrated in Image 9 and Image 10 on pages 94 and 95, respectively. Moreover, the meandering and counter-intuitive walking paths followed by migrants even on the most basic of their urban itineraries revealed the radically different spatial logics determining their lifeworlds as ‘irregular’ urban

Image 10: Hanging out and chatting at the entrance of a building during the summer noontimes' heatwave. Photo by a research participant (2014).

dwellers, as opposed to 'regular' ones, and elevated the act of walking itself within a hostile environment into an act of insurgency.

The gritty ecology of city dwellers and their swift – almost invisible to the uninitiated eye – practices were also similarly revealed. During these walks, research participants would often point out aspects of city life that laid hidden in plain sight: the smoothly choreographed performances of Nigerian street corner weed dealers; the subtle rituals of sidewalk courtship of slender Ethiopian women⁴⁷ who would occasionally have sex for money for lack of any other means of sustenance; the awkwardly-held babies in some men's arms – 'borrowed from their mothers' tit (sic)' from women that hang out at

⁴⁷ Individuals' nationalities derive from participants' descriptions and are only used indicatively here. They do not denote exclusive involvement of individuals of those nationalities in such practices.

Image 11: Kassory's mental map of 'go' and 'no-go' areas in the center of Athens. Omónoia square and Michael Voda street are marked as absolutely 'no-go' areas. Plateía Koliátsou and Plateía Amerikís, as well as the area between Acharnon Avenue up to the Attiki metro stop are ok. The area between Plateía Amerikís and Omónoia is relatively unsafe but he still needs to use it daily.

African hair salons and were used tactically as tiny human shields against police stop-and-search operations.

Audiovisual methods

Alongside psychogeographic walks, during the research process a wide range of participatory visual methods were utilized, from the digital to the handmade (Bayre, Harper and Afonso, 2016). They intended to capture the ineffable and mundane moments of participants' everyday spatial experience, illustrate its rhythms, and trace borders' often invisible fault lines. Finding solid ground in the recent upsurge in visual ethnography scholarship (Pink, 2013; Stoetzer, 2014; Leon-Quijano, 2017) and the increased interest in audiovisual methods within urban studies (Conord and Cuny, 2014; Monnet, 2014), a broad range of qualitative material was collected through

Image 12: Kassory's self-reported map of his journey from Guinea to Europe. Starting from Conakry he first travelled to Spain, where he stayed for 25 days before being arrested and deported. Then he lived in Senegal for one year before heading again to Europe, through Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and eventually Greece, over the Aegean island of Kos.

photography, video and sound recordings, as well as through participatory mapping and drawings. This multimodal gathering of empirical material had a twofold aim: to preserve vivid sensorial memories of incidents that would later inform thick descriptive accounts, and to chronicle fleeting aspects of border experiences which would be reproduced within the publications and audiovisual reflections of this thesis. This could offer readers and viewers an immersive and relatively unmediated (from the researcher's views) rendering of borders' affective materialities from a variety of standpoints.

Undertaking audiovisual ethnographic methods over a period of six years resulted into a dataset consisting of several thousands of photographs and a couple of terabytes of video and audio recordings. Inevitably, only a small number of those recordings and images were eventually included in the research's outputs. A number of photographs captured by the author and two photojournalists she had collaborated with during fieldwork, Anna Pantelia and Louis Konstantinou, are used as supporting material throughout the thesis' introductory chapters. One of Anna Pantelia's photos serves as the centrepiece of Paper 5. Mental maps created by research participants, such as those featured in Image 11 and Image 12 on pages 96 and 97 respectively, which indicate undocumented migrants' perceptions and usage of urban space and its zoning into safe/unsafe areas had informed the first paper of the thesis. The dissertation's third Paper is based on a final selection of approximately 300 images of graffiti found and captured by the author across three locations on Lesbos (the now defunct migrant reception facility of Paganí, the town of Mytiléne and the registration center of Mória). Lastly, photographs of seawashed personal items that belonged to irregular border-crossers found on the northern shores of Lesbos, along with sound samples from the location and a voice recording of the authors' personal narrative are featured in the audiovisual reflection 'Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border'. The fourth Paper draws on this visual project, tracking the human and material traces of undocumented border-crossings illustrated by the photographed items, to explore the Aegean borderscape's affective geography.

Data reduction and analysis

As previously detailed in the introductory chapter, in abductively implemented qualitative research the processes of data collection, reduction and analysis blend into one another in an iterative process that encourages expansive thinking and exploration throughout the project's duration. Due to its interpretivist nature, the present study was carried out in several stages, moving back and forth between theory and empirics, as abduction posits (Blaikie, 2000 pp: 114-119), each successive stage of data generation and analysis building upon the findings of previous ones before novel theory and knowledge was introduced, as illustrated in Figure 1 on page 29.

The large volume of empirical material that phenomenological inquiry produces, even when sampling a small number of participants, requires detailed and very time-consuming case-by-case analysis, in order to develop and refine themes and categories (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012) – a process that is repeated several times as fieldwork progresses. The in-depth exploration of how this study's participants (and the researcher) make sense of their personal and social life-worlds was undertaken through the principles of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (hereafter IPA) (Smith and Osborn, 2015). IPA requires repeated readings and critical analysis of all collected textual material (interview transcriptions and fieldnotes), and visual data (photographs, mental maps, drawings, videos)⁴⁸ to produce nuanced accounts of people's relational experiences. This process creates a double hermeneutic circle (see Figure 8 on the following page) in which the search and acquisition of information is intertwined with its subsequent analysis and interpretation. As this research progressed, its categories evolved, meanings gradually shifted, and even entire sub-topics of inquiry were abandoned or exchanged in favour of more relevant ones. Refined themes and categories began to gradually emerge from the broader and tentative ones used initially, altering the initial research question and any previously-held hypotheses in this process.

This multi-step process of analysing and synthesising the material into a descriptive text was informed by insights derived from the work of Giorgi (1997), Hycner (1985), Moustakas (1994), Quinn Patton (2002), Toulmin (2003) and van Manen (1997), as described below. The voluminous field notes, memos, personal notes, migrant journals, as well as of participant observation fieldnotes and interview transcriptions, and the visual/digital ethnographic material, such as photographs, drawings, maps and videos, were either transcribed (in the case of textual information), or categorised and accompanied by short descriptions (in the case of audiovisual material) and roughly coded according to general themes. Gradually they were

⁴⁸ For examples of IPA application on visual material see, for example, Shinebourne and Smith (2011) and Boden, Larkin and Iyer (2019).

Figure 8: Hermeneutic framework consisting of two major hermeneutic circles. Diagram by the author, adapted from Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014, p. 264).

subdivided into more fine-grained categories. This facilitated the ongoing analysis and suggested further topics to be probed. At the same time, I often revisited the original material to regain a sense of the whole, as well as its constitutive parts, as the project progressed.

As general codes and categories evolved and became clearer, the conceptual model was updated and informed by tracking consistencies and differences between the previously set codes and the events they described. At the same time, I made sure I kept a ‘surprise box’, which contained any contradictory or paradoxical field observations or empirical material for future consideration and unpacking.

Visual data were firstly categorised roughly according to their sources and themes. The most prominent among them were then selected for further content analysis. Material was anonymised and translated into textual information, which was aided – whenever possible – by cross-referencing important information with insights

deriving from other narratives and my personal notes. Periodically, long-term research participants were consulted for fact-checking, either regarding material they – or others – had provided, or with respect to the study's overall direction and conceptualisation.

All collected material was processed digitally with the help of specialised software such as NVivo™ for coding, Transcriva™ for transcriptions, Evernote™ for managing online information traffic, while academic literature was managed with Mendeley™.

The resulting written and visual research outputs, even though they were produced at different times, were nevertheless connected by a common aspiration to adhere to van Manen's (1997) four criteria for hermeneutic phenomenological research rigor: orientation (the involvement of the researcher in research participants' narratives and lifeworlds); strength (the capacity of the text to demonstrate an understanding of the participants' narratively expressed meanings); richness (by producing a narrative text of high aesthetic quality); and depth (regarding the text's capacity to access and accurately express participants' intentions).

Ethics, reflexivity and positionality

Ethnographers often find themselves in a particularly challenging position, as their approaches to- and interpretations of others' experiences are multilaterally scrutinised regarding their potential bias and attention to difference while conducting research. Their role gets further complicated when working across lines of difference that matter for social interactions, such as those based on age, gender, race/ethnicity, social positions and class (Orellana, 2009, p. 127). Although lines of differentiation may sometimes be diffused, social ascriptions can never be entirely escaped. When working with vulnerable individuals or groups within sensitive contexts and competing discourses, researchers are inevitably required to address issues of ethics, reflexivity and positionality. The task of resolving those challenges should be seen not as an one-off decision, but as an ongoing process of practicing reflexivity and implementing it at each stage of a study, from research design and fieldwork, up to the final

writing of its results and their dissemination (Luttrell, 2000; Mauthner and Doucet, 2003).

A researcher's positionality vis-à-vis the research process and its participants needs to be problematised and clarified early on. Possible modes of engagement range from complete detachment to committed involvement (Blaikie, 2007). In this study, depending on the different fieldwork contexts, I have opted for an amalgam of roles that would facilitate the creation of meaningful connections with my interlocutors, and which would help them recognise their experiences and narratives in the final manuscript. Those positions vacillated between 'empathic observer', 'faithful reporter', 'reflective partner' and 'dialogic facilitator' (Blaikie, 2000a, pp. 52–54). My role was that of someone who immerses herself in the participants' social world and attempts to grasp their meanings and experiences through their subjective narratives and through engagement in empathic and dialogic meaning-making with them, the multivocal products of which were preserved and presented with utmost attention to maintain the integrity of the phenomenon under study. Moreover, explicit acknowledgments were made regarding any personal positions relevant to the topic (e.g. personal migration histories, gender, age, status and social background) as they would add pertinent information and reveal potential bias. Undertaking 'ethics as an ongoing process' that would not exhaust itself by filling in an Ethics Board form, or by the signing of a single consent form, nor by making decisions on participants' (non)remuneration, has been previously advocated for (Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002; Mackenzie *et al.*, 2007). Ethical requirements are certainly not conclusively fulfilled through the conscientious anonymization of data, or a painstaking commitment to confidentiality, neither by decisions on how to deal with covert and overt aspects of research.

Such obvious angles aside, this project required attention to subtler aspects of ethical issues inherent in social research. One such example is the directionality and content of one of social research's core prerequisites: that of 'non-maleficence'. Where do the limits of 'do no harm' lie, and how may researchers be prepared for the unpre-

dictable twists this requirement may take? It is not rare that researchers might find this dictum working against them while they get embroiled in trouble caused by ill-meaning individuals from their research contexts, while they remain morally and oftentimes legally bound to the conditions of anonymity and participant protection. This is a thorny issue, which, unfortunately, did emerge during this research and strongly jeopardised its continuation and outcome. It is, therefore, imperative to open and maintain critical discussions about the various ethical entanglements in qualitative research, especially in strands working with 'vulnerable' or variously 'othered' populations. Seeking answers to those anything but straightforward questions would bring to light not only issues faced by research subjects and their communities, but also acknowledge blind spots in academic praxis that may, at times, lead to the exploitation and burn-out of equally vulnerable researchers.

Methodological contributions

One of the core contributions of this study lies in its inclusive scope that expanded to encompass important and often missing angles and voices of 'other' borderlanders, aside from its initial empirical focus on sub-Saharan irregular migrants. By following the stories told by migrants, fieldwork was redirected towards a range of other actors (such as border guards, the coastguard, the police, locals and activists, among others) and strived for multivocality. These groups have commonly been kept apart in academic literature, as well as in mainstream discourse. Their perspectives, positionalities, relations and aspirations have often been reductively understood as wholly conflicting and antagonistic, or they have been erroneously and uncritically considered as unquestionably allied around 'shared' causes and goals. The nuances of their relational dynamics, however, have not been adequately explored to illuminate the emergence of unforeseen synergies and unlikely contestations among them, as it was indicated through fieldwork for this research.

The unanticipated complexity and the conceptual and empirical challenges posed by the research topic necessitated a continuous refinement and adjustment of the initial research design, especially of the data collection and analysis methods. An additional contribution

of this study, therefore, is the proposal of a ‘methodological bricolage’ (Kincheloe, 2001, 2004) as an eclectic yet pragmatic approach to qualitative research that has the potential to ‘avoid[s] both the superficiality of methodological breadth and the parochialism of unidisciplinary approaches’ (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 679).

From a social scientist’s standpoint, I strongly believe that researchers ought to aim not only towards our personal conscientisation and that of our kindred academic community around the issues we explore, but also work towards the sensitisation of society at large, even more so of groups and individuals subjected to multiple exclusions and marginalisations. Thus, since the beginning of this project, I regarded awareness-raising on borders’ workings and the engagement of multiple audiences in thinking critically about them as issues of crucial significance, especially with regard to research participants and their communities. I consider one of this project’s most significant contributions to be the impact it strived to make within as well as outside academia through the broad dissemination of acquired knowledge both through academic and open public talks, and through the creation and distribution of various outputs aside from scholarly publications, such as video, photography, television and press interviews, among others, that could reach and have an impact on broad audiences possessing different levels and types of literacy.

Methodological limitations

Certain limitations ought to be noted with regard to the interpretation and significance of this research and its findings. First of all, due to the inception and informal commencement of this research prior to being officially admitted to a Ph.D. program, part of the material was collected during its initial exploratory phase, without first obtaining formal clearance from an Ethics Board. Despite this inconsistency regarding formal conventions, however, all phases and aspects of this study have been following the standards of professional conduct and upheld fundamental research principles, such as beneficence, non-maleficence, ensuring that informed consent was obtained, protecting participants’ anonymity and confidentiality, avoiding deceptive practices, and giving participants the right to

withdraw at any point. Following my admission to the Ph.D. program, further familiarisation with the guidelines, codes and laws regulating higher education research ethics was continually sought through the enrolment to specialized research ethics courses, and through consulting the CODEX website, which outlines ethical research rules and guidelines in Sweden (CODEX, 2019).

A second limitation that arises from the successive phases and adjusted focus of the research, despite the iterative research strategy undertaken, was that certain questions and concepts had not risen early enough in the exploratory phase, therefore observations and fieldnotes around certain themes were found lacking depth later on. This was addressed by getting in touch with research participants again and further discussing those topics, revisiting certain locations, or writing ‘post facto’ recollection notes, to supplement my ‘real time’ fieldnotes.

Due to financial and practical constraints, the in-depth fieldwork was largely undertaken along the two sides of the southeastern EU border, in Greece and Turkey at a particularly turbulent time regarding irregular migration in the region. As already mentioned, this material was supplemented with data collected online, a number of visits to research participants that had left Greece for other EU countries, and existing literature. This data pool might create a potential bias that could limit the relevance and applicability of the findings in other geographical/temporal settings, especially in locations, both regionally and globally, that irregular border crossers consider as more favourable places for settlement rather than areas of transit, incarceration, or indeterminate lock-in, such as the region in focus. Expanding this research to other contexts would be highly valuable.

Furthermore, despite the collection of first-hand testimonies from people who had been directly impacted by the effects and affects of borders, many voices remain absent, interrupted, muted or out of reach altogether. Linguistic, cultural and time restrictions, as well as limitations imposed due to geographical settings, dwelling arrangements, and the particularities of irregular living and travelling, as well as professional restrictions to information disclosure (placed on

persons working in positions of authority around borders, for example) have contributed to the disparities in the representation of certain groups or individuals. The under-representation of female migrant voices, and those of coast/border guards and police officers is an important limitation that future research should address.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of this study's research philosophy, methodology and methods, as well as the processes of data selection, collection and analysis. It also touched upon issues of ethics, reflexivity and positionality and concluded by listing the study's contributions and any limitations encountered.

Approaching the study of the affective geographies of irregular border-crossings in the Southern European/Eastern Mediterranean context in times of major economic, social and political upheaval from a methodological stance that favours multi-sited ethnographic and phenomenological approaches while working with a variety of actors with the use of a range of complementary qualitative methods has helped me obtain rich and in-depth insights on the complexity and differentiation of the role and multiscale function of borders, and their contestation from below.

Addressing issues of ethics, reflexivity and positionality as ongoing challenges, rather than one-off decisions has been a central tenet of this research. Maintaining transparency, rigor and coherence, as well as sensitivity towards the overall research context, while aspiring to make an impactful research contribution have been among this study's core principles. However, limitations persist mainly with regard to the ongoing reformulation of the research design, which is to be expected in a study of exploratory nature. Potential bias regarding the applicability of its findings elsewhere, as well as the inevitable loss of certain voices in this process should also be noted.

5. OVERVIEW OF THE PUBLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarises the five papers and the visual project that are included in this dissertation. Each paper pursues the inquiry of the southeastern Mediterranean borderscape's bottom-up constitution, construction and contestation from different angles, in various locations and sociospatial contexts, and with the use of diverse qualitative methods and theoretical approaches designed to capture the role of heterogeneous elements and actors in these processes.

Four single-authored publications (Papers 1, 2, 4, 5) and one co-authored (Paper 3) were published in peer-reviewed journals between 2013 and 2019. The visual project has been publicly available online since 2016, aside from its invited screenings, and was recently requested for republication in the *Journal of Narrative Politics*. This video is the point of reference of Paper 4, while it is also presented in the appended supplementary essay containing its narrative description and transcription.

In this chapter the papers are presented separately in their order of journal submission with an outline of their key findings, the connections between them, and the ways in which they draw on the overarching theoretical and methodological framing to address different elements of the research question.

Summary of publications

Paper 1

Tsoni, I. (2013). 'African border-crossings in a 'city of Others': Constellations of irregular im/mobility and in/equality in the everyday urban environment of Athens', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 27(1), pp. 141–169.

This paper draws on urban theory, critical mobilities, as well as border and migration studies to investigate borders and boundaries at the meso- and micro scale (within a city, a neighbourhood, or embedded within individual bodies) as spatial and symbolic demarcations that have devolved from inter/national territorial borders and as expressions of macro sociopolitical processes in times of austerity. As such, these demarcation lines are not exclusively traced along the territorial limits of nation-states but may be encountered in unanticipated locations, such as urban centers.

A multi-sited, multi-method and context-sensitive ethnographic approach is implemented, to embrace the many voices, narratives and situated experiences, including that of the researcher, which emerge in the exploration of urban borderscapes and their affective dimensions. The research follows the movements and negotiations of irregular migrants within the urban environment of Athens and focuses on their self-authored narratives and on autoethnographic vignettes from the researcher's perspective. These observations were made before the advent of the 'refugee crisis' that has since then affected these processes significantly.

I contend that in the case of Greece the compounded effects of the global financial and migration crises have severely strained the country's capacity to safeguard its national self-determination not only regarding the state's internal affairs, but also with regard to the management of the country's territorial borders, which coincide with the EU's external borders. This 'hollowing out' of Greece's national sovereignty, I argue, triggers a process akin to 'vacuum implosion' of

the nation-state: borders subside, fracture and disperse across the Greek territory. They form a scattered minefield of physical, social and symbolic barriers upon which different supra/national authorities interlock. Those boundary formations follow a 'trickle down' effect, from the macro- down to the smallest social micro-scale: they adhere to the bodies that encounter them, such as migrants and other urban outcasts, and get diffused into the spaces they inhabit.

Athens is the first major urban center on European soil that EU-bound irregular migrants settle in. It is simultaneously located both at the very heart of the national and European political, economic and geographic space, as well as bey(on)d their margins. The paper takes an ethnographic look onto the Greek capital's increasingly fragmented downtown area through the powerful story taken from the migration journal of Michel or 'Canada' and through the inclusion of other testimonies and observations that foreground experiences commonly faced by the multiply marginalised French-speaking West African migrants vis-à-vis other urban dwellers.

The resulting qualitative dataset highlights locally-derived experiences of urban marginalisation and allows a closer observation of the shifting patterns of sociospatial im/mobility and in/equality encountered by irregular migrants of colour and other 'non regular' urban dwellers (including the Greek 'new poor', the homeless and the Roma) in times of socioeconomic downturn and mass migration. Irregularity in this work is understood not merely as a legal category that is interchangeable with illegality or 'paperlessness'. Instead, it is portrayed as a lived experience that condenses a range of intersecting deviations from a social collective's rules, regularities and regulations.

Such lived experiences of irregularity are touched upon in the paper through the presentation of the unanticipated affective atmospheres in which migrants are enmeshed. They are constituted by the different social and material configurations encountered by migrants, which in, turn, affect their well-being as well as their social and physical trajectories during their transit and stay at various locations. The empirical material demonstrates how destitution, dejection, scorn

and bigotry experienced early on are sustained with as much dignity and perseverance as one can muster. Disappointment regarding the Greek reality upon arrival, and the frustrations of being let down by one's compatriots are gradually counteracted through the trial-and-error formation of solidarities and trustful networks with unlikely and context-specific allies, who often belong to the ranks of urban dispossessed themselves. Becoming more 'street-smart', knowing the inconspicuous affinities of different groups and forming strategic solidarities, sometimes with local socioeconomically marginalised populations, as well as being aware of ways to manoeuvre and negotiate a city's social and physical environment to avoid harassment or being treated 'like animals' by the police and others gradually empowers and safeguards migrants within a context of arbitrary legality, rekindling their aspirations for a better life and the possibility of eventual social change despite the adversities they undergo.

These processes give rise to an ever-growing number of configurations of otherness, but also to alternative modes of belonging: in spite of their persistent relegation to the margins, such 'irregular' populations resist their erasure from public spaces, even if merely through their refusal to retreat from the social sphere and fade into sociospatial invisibility. Irregular migrants come up with strategies and tactics to navigate and negotiate physical and symbolic boundaries in their daily lives. They manoeuvre the city and claim their right to it, reclaim space for themselves and reshape the city into 'a city of Others' by forming unconventional solidarities with other 'irregulars'. They become strategic actors that challenge the top-down b/ordering processes intending to keep 'outsiders' in their place.

Paper 2

Tsoni, I. (2016). ‘They won’t let us come, they won’t let us stay, they won’t let us leave’. Liminality in the Aegean borderscape: The case of irregular migrants, volunteers and locals on Lesbos’ *Journal of Human Geography*, 9(1), pp. 35-46.

This paper focuses on the island of Lesbos during the refugee emergency of 2015 as a critical location along a much-fraught supra/national territorial borderline (EU/Greece-Turkey). It traces liminality as an experience and as a process that permeates the lives of various borderlanders who inhabit – however temporarily and under diverse capacities – the border landscape of Lesbos. The effects of permanent, portable and protracted liminality are examined as experienced viscerally at the micro level by a variety of differentially positioned border actors that, one would assume, would hardly have a point of convergence of their experiences during the ongoing refugee emergency in southeastern Europe. Material collected during several visits to the island renders a composite sketch of the different eras of irregular migration along the Greek-Turkish border. The dynamics and complexities of the southern European borders are revealed, as they are encountered by- and negotiated between different groups: newly arrived migrants and refugees, inter/national volunteers and activists, and local inhabitants. Methods have included in-depth discussions and informal interviews, personal narratives and testimonies, participant observation, recollections from research diaries, online ethnography, as well as mobile and digital approaches.

The 2015 refugee exodus towards Europe is approached through the classic anthropological notion of a tripartite rite of passage, consisting of three successive stages: separation, liminality, and aggregation. During this ritualised transition, individuals go through these distinct phases, being forced to distance themselves for an extended period of time from their communities of origin and enter an ambiguous phase, wherein their identity is suspended while they are subjected to various trials before being allowed to reintegrate into society.

On Lesbos, however, different categories of borderlanders find themselves indefinitely caught in the liminal middle stage of this ritualistic transition. As previously-held hierarchies are reversed or dissolved under the forces of the ongoing massive sociopolitical transformation, borderlanders – whether newly-arrived irregular migrants and international volunteers, or the island's permanent population – are afflicted by similar processes of deep-seated uncertainty and disconcertment, finding themselves caught 'at the threshold' of an ambiguous future. Fieldwork vignettes illustrate these emergent articulations of liminality as an extended and mobile condition, which is induced by traversing borders or merely being in their vicinity and within their range of impact. Those who are caught up in this middle ground under different capacities eventually come to discover that they have limited – if any – possibilities of exiting it.

Liminality, thus, becomes a protracted socio-spatial and temporal condition that emerges within the crisis-scape of a borderland location, affecting both irregular migrants and the receiving communities. Yet, the experience of liminality is found to transcend the spatial confines of the island and gets recast as an enduring form of subjectivity. This is at odds with the classical conceptualization of a ritual passage, which is expected to follow a predictable linear progression through the rite's successive stages before reaching its eventual conclusion of social reintegration and higher social ranking.

I contend that these observations offer a salient example of liminality's contemporary routinization and gradual socio-spatial and temporal 'stretching' into a prevalent and portable condition, which is experienced both at an individual- as well as at a collective level by a wide range of actors. The paper illustrates how the migratory passage becomes an impenetrable impasse for border crossers, as successive groups of migrants and refugees that have passed through the island of Lesbos during the last decade voice a common lament: *'they won't let us come, they won't let us stay, they won't let us leave'*.

The paper evokes the affective atmospheres emerging at different locations and times across the island, and the human/material/envi-

ronmental interactions that animated them: assemblages of bureaucratic paperwork; fingerprints and stamps; inhospitable sea and land environments; treasured possessions trashed purposefully to avoid compromising one's passage; authorities' long-term legal and political complicity; contrasting bodies' physical strength and resilience to the materiality of regular means of transportation denied to them; sacrificial sea-divination ceremonies; emotionally saturated arrivals replete with the warmth of familiar flavours, voices, prayers and songs; a mesh of observable and internalised expressions: hand gestures, voice tones, facial expressions, averted gazes, body movements. A broad range of in/congruent emotions and affects: exhilaration and fear, solidarity and deviance; relief and euphoria, sadness and indignation; crippling uncertainty; profound faith. Crisis-borne frustration and ruin. A sea haunted by the ever-rising toll of unjustifiable deaths.

In this context, it is argued that the borderscape of Lesvos emerges as a foucauldian 'crisis heterotopia': a privileged, sacred or forbidden place; a landscape of combined crisis and deviance reserved for the aberrant, the abnormal, the 'othered', which in this case includes irregular migrants and anyone who comes into contact with them. Despite undergoing profound experiences of displacement, alienation and destitution, albeit for different reasons, many of those actors challenge top-down conceptualisations of border enforcement and control. They maintain a certain sense of being-at-home in the world, above and beyond the untenable conditions of protracted and expansive liminality they experience, by contrasting their individual and collective agency, resistance and resilience to it.

Paper 3

Wagner Tsoni, I., Karlsson-Franck A. (2019). 'Writings on the wall: Textual traces of transit in the Aegean borderscape'. *Borders in Globalisation Review*, 1(1), pp. 9-23.

This co-authored paper maintains the geographical focus on Lesbos and focuses on three locations of migrant passage and incarceration through the examination of graffiti that expressed the border-induced effects and affects of migrants and activists since the early 2000s. Through a longitudinal perspective it presents local manifestations of irregular migration on Lesbos dating long before the outbreak of the European 'refugee crisis' of 2015. Spaces of migrant and refugee transit or containment along the perilous cross-border pathways of irregular mobility are revisited and vernacular aspects of bordering, such as graffiti, are examined. Specifically, the practice of border-crossers and other groups who stand in solidarity with – or against – them, to inscribe messages on walls in and around carceral and public spaces, is examined as a process demonstrating aspects of the construction and contestation of borders from below.

In this study, the abstract notions of borders and borderscapes are staked upon specific practices, materialities and affects that highlight the situated border experiences and narratives of different groups and individuals. Border graffiti is understood as a liminal sociospatial practice and a ritualized means of communication, which turns border landscapes into direct communicative devices. In the widespread crisis context that both Greece as a whole and the island of Lesbos in particular are currently going through, these messages of hope, heed, trauma, self-determination, resilience, challenging of authorities, or migrant support and solidarity voiced through the inscriptions and the graffiti trace the harsh affective geographies that the overarching border regimes have helped shape and thereafter purposefully disregarded.

The paper argues for the empirical and conceptual importance of collecting and studying border graffiti by drawing upon a dataset

consisting of a portfolio of approximately 300 photographs of graffiti messages photographed at three locations on Lesbos over several visits between 2012 and 2016. Two of those locations were spaces of migrant interception and confinement: the now defunct detention center of Paganí, and the EU ‘hot spot’/registration center of Mória, as well as the public walls of the island’s capital Mytiléne.

Several interrelated themes emerge from the collected inscriptions, revealing how migrants and locals experience and negotiate borders and their effects and affects in their day-to-day lives. These themes include their reclamation of agency and personal identity within conditions of liminal waiting; offering encouragement, solidarity and advice to others; the borderlanders’ personal perspectives on border embodiment and affectivity; and their resistance to borders and border-related politics.

Some of the affects that are touched upon in the inscriptions include: hope and the will for survival and perseverance; feeling lucky and expressing happiness and gratefulness for the course of one’s journey; worry, self-pity and fear – but also encouragement to resist losing one’s hope despite facing imminent danger and even death; affinity towards others that are, or will be, in a similar position; dismay at one’s incarceration conditions; a feeling of rebirth and intense joy upon one’s interception in the sea; pride for one’s country but also a sense of betrayal by it; camaraderie and unity; expressions of love, affection and longing for people, places or ideas; faith in God; fear and indignation towards bordering policies; blaming and shaming the authorities and organisations that enact those policies and practices as well as those who partake in them.

The locations and materials used for the expression of those messages, and their condition and accessibility (crumbling walls of former storage facilities turned into detention centers; inaccessible surfaces behind barbed-wire fences; diligently whitewashed outer surfaces of EU registration camps; stones and olive trees and public walls around town) are also indicative of the living conditions faced by border-crossers, the physical and affective atmospheres shaped

by them, and the inequality between their own voices' capacity to reach a wider audience and that of the institutionalized responses.

Through its unmediated interjection in public discourse, border graffiti lays claims to one's right of be/coming despite their subjection to multiple border-induced sociospatial excisions. The messages narrate loss and survival, reclaim lost lives and identities and render visible and legible the countless testimonies of passage, peril and perseverance in the face of adversity. The borderlanders' role as unbidden authors of the border's purposefully obscured memory and history 'from below' is, therefore, emphasized. Moreover, they reveal the experiential and affective topography of the Aegean borderscape and they challenge top-down discourses on the effects and affects of border and migration politics in the area. They do so through the preservation and reassertion of personal and collective biographies, subjectivities and agencies in the formation of the Aegean borderscape despite the generalized anonymity and facelessness that people are subjected to in such contexts.

The findings suggest that what these 'writings on the wall' reveal exceeds the literal textual content of the inscriptions. These ephemeral inscriptions have persistently pointed at some of the border's incipient dimensions, such as their power to exert violent, exclusionary and discriminatory practices against individuals and collectivities engaged in frontier struggles. Much like the spraypaint bleeding through the freshly-whitewashed walls around spaces of refugee incarceration (see the last image of this paper), border graffiti challenges the painstaking efforts at beautifying the inter/national authorities' failure to uphold and protect the most basic and fundamental of human- and refugee rights.

Paper 4

Wagner Tsoni, I. (2019). ““Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border”: A visual archaeogeography of the Aegean borderscape’, *K/JNESH SPACE*, 2.

This paper belongs to the two-part project that includes the video essay *‘Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border’*. Drawing on geography’s growing interest in visual methodologies and on the recent turns to affect and materiality in cultural studies, both the publication and the film explore the largely overlooked material and affective dimensions of the Aegean borderscape, through the human and material traces of irregular border-crossings on the northern shores of Lesbos during the height of refugee arrivals in the winter of 2015.

More specifically, the paper traces the effects of contemporary bordering processes at the micro level as they are revealed by commonly overlooked materialities of refugee crossings and social interactions between border-crossers and volunteer rescuers within the microgeography of the Lighthouse beach on the Northern shores of Lesbos (see Map 4 on p. 74). The residual materials of irregular migration, along with the social actors themselves (migrants and volunteers) are foregrounded as protagonists of this narrative, possessing distinct biographies that interlock at the moment of encounter with the border and give rise to particular affective atmospheres. This publication answers to the calls for a broader engagement with the archaeology of forced migration and the archaeology of affect and combines these approaches from a geographical perspective into an archaeogeography of irregular migration within the eastern Mediterranean borderscape, that seeks to chronicle and salvage the invisibilised human, material and affective traces at a momentous historical juncture.

Photography, reflexive video ethnography and autoethnographic narrative were used for the creation of the visual project’s ethnographic fiction around the narrator’s encounter with a female border-crosser and ‘her’ scattered belongings. The publication goes be-

yond the video's atmospherics and aesthetics, however, to contextualise and theorise some of the obscured aspects of the human/material/environmental assemblages of forced migration within the Aegean borderscape and those elements' affective encounters. Moreover, it aims to integrate them within the archaeology of contemporary undocumented migration framework from a geographical perspective.

The borderscape's materiality and its materially-induced affectivity, are foregrounded and approached through a new materialist perspective, which reinstates objects with their innate biography, power and agency. Through the juxtaposition of the notions of 'trash' and 'traces' in the title of the film it is suggested that both the photographed objects as well as their former owners, are simultaneously perceived as objects and subjects that are similarly ascribed as 'waste' to be removed and disposed of after the extraction of any residual value they may carry. Yet, despite being 'matter out of place', both border crossers and the residual materialities of their crossing are also understood as meaningful traces that reveal larger social processes currently underway in the region and their embodied and material effects. An attunement to- and chronicling of those 'wasted' materialities, socialities, and temporalities of the borderscape gives rise to the archaeogeography of undocumented border-crossings at the margins of Europe.

Through the forensic investigation of the seawashed personal items, and the narrative analysis of the storified encounter between the rescuer/researcher and the refugee, the project's insights indicate that the EU border regime bears severe and unaddressed somatic and affective impact upon refugees and other borderlanders, especially those on the frontline of refugee rescue and reception. Despite the scale of human suffering and loss, however, the magnitude of solidarity and resilience expressed on the ground are also consequential and can potentially have a 'bottom up' impact on the actual and metaphorical trajectories of refugees' arrested lifepaths at the margins of Europe, even if incrementally.

Visual Project

Wagner Tsoni, I. (2019). 'Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border'. *Journal of Narrative Politics*, 6(1). Available at: <https://jnp.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/default/article/view/118/115>

This essay, which is not meant to be published, serves as an accompanying textual reference to the visual project within this dissertation. It offers an illustrative narrative description of the film's content so that readers can be familiarised with it without viewing the actual film. The essay aims to 'paint a word picture' of the video by going through it scene-by-scene, identifying and contextualising the depicted objects, as well as by offering a detailed self-reflexive account of the narrator's experience as she moves within- and, in turn, is being violently moved by the environment of ruination and hope on Lesbos' shores. Readers are thus introduced to the physical, mental and emotional landscapes in which the storyteller and her interlocutor, Somaya, are situated and follow the vicissitudes of their encounter to its ambiguous conclusion.

This audiovisual project raises the question of how we perceive, experience, research and represent borderscapes and the multitude of human and non-human bodies that populate them. It also aims to take audiences beyond the limitations of an exclusively linguistic, visual and intellectual understanding of experiences and encounters at the border. This is done by submerging viewers sensorially and affectively through their proximal senses (smell, hearing, taste, touch) to aspects of everyday life, and loss, as experienced personally by the researcher/narrator along the EU's liquid borders. A transcription of the film's narrative is appended at the end of the essay.

Paper 5

Wagner Tsoni, I. (2019). ‘Parsing the Aegean affective borderscape’, *Journal of Narrative Politics*, 6(1), pp. 4-21.

The fifth paper of this compilation aims to contextualise from a longitudinal perspective the effects and affects that the liquid border across the Aegean spurs within the sociospatial landscapes it cuts across. Using a photograph that illustrates a seemingly ‘mundane’ moment of bordering and pulling on the multiple storylines that are interlocked within the image’s ostensible stillness, the essay calls attention to the materialities, spatial and historical specificities, affective intensities, interlocking authorities and uneven power dynamics activated between the human and non-human actors encountering each other along the fraught lines of EU’s southeastern borders.

The publication’s opening paragraphs touch upon the elusiveness of trying to depict borders visually, as their functions often remain invisible and difficult to represent. The presumably ‘uneventful’ photograph brings to light facets of borders that remain hidden in plain sight. Through content analysis and compositional interpretation of the image’s details, the Aegean borderscape emerges as a contact zone and as a charged field of interaction between shifting configurations of relationally-positioned actors.

Bringing forth and engaging with seemingly minor elements – discarded lifejackets, a mountain range in the distance, the rising sun, the horizon line, the invisible liquid borderline, some dark specks across the calm sea – a landscape emerges, that is simultaneously striated and sutured by various forces, logics, mobilities, technologies, historicities, affectivities and imaginaries, which are found to be grappling congruently or antithetically with each other. Affect is tied to the border landscape, to its physical characteristics, its material composition, as well as to its proximate and distant temporality and the variety of visible and latent forces present within it.

The image's ambiguous spatiality is touched upon first, locating it within a space of paradoxically intersecting mobilities (refugees versus tourists) on the shores of Lesbos, and highlighting the contestations along the Greek-Turkish borders. The deep national traumas of this intense, century-old dispute have affective reverberations in collective memory to this day. The inhospitable reactions to forcibly (re)moved populations of the past bear disturbing similarities to the reception of people seeking refuge in our times. The mobility, legal overregulation and hypersc securitisation of the maritime border is also touched upon, as multiple authorities and sovereignties assert their claims along its lines. Yet, aside from its partitional qualities, this border has also connected the peoples inhabiting its shores – linking their present, past and future, their ancestries, histories and cultures.

The materiality and sociality of the border are also foregrounded through the analysis of the discarded lifejackets and their owners' absence. Disconcerting affects are stirred and explored by the symbolic and physical qualities of these objects, and their impact on the fate of the persons that are missing from this picture. These aspects are also crucial when examining the role of the three vessels in the picture, and of their passengers: a coastguard boat, a refugee dinghy and a commercial or passenger ship in the distance. The juxtaposition of the legal, political and technological systems that regulate the trajectories and rights to passage and rescue of the persons aboard those vessels throws the ingrained injustices and imperceptible filtering mechanisms of the contemporary world system in stark relief.

Unpacking the borders' visually perceivable qualities, such as their layout, form, structure, human and material inhabitation, and interweaving them with visceral and subjective experiences that reflect the sensory and emotional richness of this landscape, invites the viewer/reader to experientially relate to this landscape. The notion of affective borderscape is, therefore, substantiated as a complex site of affective and emotional investment, where various feelings, emotions, and precognitive affects exerted by multiple human and non-human actors (migrants, citizens, humanitarian volunteers, state agents, physical environment elements, and dispersed material traces

of both state power, and the migration regime), and those actors themselves, encounter and work with- and against each other.

Connecting the findings of the previous 4 publications, this paper concludes with an attempt at elucidating the notion of affective borderscapes. From this perspective, traces of affective aspects of borderscapes are usually found within short physical distance from state borders. However, they may also erupt unexpectedly away from national frontiers, in actual or virtual locations that span territorial scales: from sites or events of global interest, through local milieus (a neighbourhood, a city block, a street corner), from public spaces to private ones, reaching all the way down to the 'geography the closest in – the body'. A corporeal mobile border carrying within it emotional, mental and often physical marks and traumas from borders past. Inner city neighbourhoods, rural locations, and digital expanses that appear to be worlds apart, and totally unrelated to borders are interconnected through the shared dynamics and intensities, and mutual affectations between the places, people, politics and powers that constitute them.

6. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study has revolved around the personal narratives and experiences of a broad range of ‘border affects’ expressed by persons who have encountered the multitude of borderlines stretching across the southeastern peripheries of Europe. This inquiry was undertaken with the aim of exploring and theorising the concept of affective borderscapes that this thesis puts forward as an original contribution to the fields of border and migration studies, as well as to affect theory. I propose this concept as a theoretical contribution that touches upon certain less problematised aspects of contemporary bordering processes which emerged during my research. This conceptualisation posits that affects should be understood as relational phenomena that transpire not only from ‘below’, at the scale of individual persons and small groups, but also ‘from above’, from the perspective of overarching authorities, institutions and social collectivities. It is through the range of un/intentional affective practices of those human and non-human actors that borders are constructed, enacted and contested on the ground.

What are the implications of my findings for the understanding of borders and borderscapes, their relationship with different types of bodies, and the flow of affects among the spaces, humans and things that constitute them? In Chapter three, I analysed the theoretical framework on borderscapes, migration, affect and liminality from a Mediterranean point of view and offered a preliminary outline of the concept of affective borderscapes. In Chapter four, I explained how ethnographic and affectively-attuned phenomenological research can access important and meaningful information in participants’ lifeworlds, both as narrativized and directly observed incidents. Chapter five offered an overview of the publications and summarised the ways in which the different strands of research that have

been followed within this project have addressed the overarching questions of the study.

In this final chapter, I draw on the material introduced in all previous chapters to present the linkages between this dissertation's compiled publications and articulate their results, while focussing on their theoretical, methodological and empirical import. Then, drawing on the theoretical framework of Chapter four, I bring the findings into dialogue with the notion of affective borderscapes. I then proceed to provide answers to the research question presented in the Introduction. The chapter concludes with an analysis of this study's significance and contribution to knowledge, indicates certain limitations as well as possible ways to overcome them, and suggests directions for future research.

Linkages between the publications

Firstly, it should be noted that the linkages between the publications, and the ways each of the papers approaches the research topic through the scope of its own thematic, both individually and in conjunction with the rest of them, are also summarised for the readers' convenience in Table 2 on pages 126-127. The five papers and the visual project offer incremental answers from different angles to the overarching research question regarding the construction, enaction and contestation of affective borderscapes in the southeastern Mediterranean/Aegean region, its main actors, and the multiscalar impact of their affective practices.

The overall conceptualisation of affective Aegean borderscapes, as inquired by the research question, is synthesised through the partial answers provided to each publication's individual research questions (summarized in row 1: 'Research Questions' of Table 2).

Each paper utilises a number of analytical concepts to address its individual inquiry (summarized in row 2 'Main Concepts' of Table 2). These provide the theoretical building blocks from which I draw

and elaborate on through my empirical material to suggest the theoretical contributions that this research puts forth (summarized in row 7: ‘Theoretical Contributions’ of Table 2).

A variety of non/urban spatial settings are examined in the publications, which are located both in the vicinity of state borders as well as far from them (summarized in row 3: ‘Locations’ of Table 2). This approach helped indicate the portability and mobility of borderscapes as well as the struggles and affective resonances stirred within them in unanticipated locations, especially in urban centres, following the im/mobile migrant bodies.

Regarding the study’s temporal scope, it should be noted that the majority of the empirical material refers to events or observations that took place between 2012 and 2018. This includes the official doctoral fieldwork timeframe (2013-2018) and one year of preparatory exploratory fieldwork (2012). Information acquired through the participants’ retrospective narratives, however, or from the chronologically-dated content of border graffiti that was collected across Lesvos (and which was presented in Paper 3) covers a far more extensive time period – roughly from 2000 onwards – from which inferences are drawn. Moreover, the sociogeographic development of this borderscape and its affective reverberations are also examined from a historical perspective in Paper 5. This research, therefore, offers a medium-range longitudinal overview on the topic under study, supplemented with the incorporation of historical details regarding in/voluntary cross-border mobility in the Aegean Sea, and its residual effects and affects in present times. The publications’ temporal scope is summarized in row 4: ‘Time Focus’ of Table 2.

Epistemological and methodological insights regarding ways of approaching and interpreting the emergence, flow, and distribution of affect are dispersed among the published papers. Methodologically, all four papers follow a common thread, as they combine a variety of qualitative/ethnographic tools and techniques, which have been detailed in Chapter four, and are summarized in row 5: ‘Key Methods’ of Table 2.

	Paper 1	Paper 2
Research Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do bordering processes manifest within the urban environment of Athens? - How do irregular migrants and local undersirables experience, negotiate and contest urban borderscapes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How has the European border and asylum crisis affected the socio-spatial geography of Lesbos? - How are liminality, im/mobility and ir/regularity experienced by various actors in the Aegean borderscape? - What is the material and spectral constitution of this liminal landscape?
Main concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ir/regularity - Im/mobility - 'Othering' - Urban borderlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liminality - Heterotopia - Rites of passage - Border affects - Border materialities - Aegean border/scape
Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Athens (Kypseli and Plateia Amerikis) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lesbos (Multiple urban and rural locations)
Time Focus	2010–2013	2012–2016
Key Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Auto)ethnography - Participant observation - Migrant journals - Urban walks - Document analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant observation - Ethnographic fieldnotes - Digital ethnography - Informal interviews - Document analysis
Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irregular sub-Saharan African migrants' narratives - Socioeconomically marginalised locals - Researcher's personal experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Narratives from volunteers, refugees from various countries, and receiving communities on Lesbos - Researcher's personal experiences
Theoretical Contributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of 'Others' - Urban borderscapes - Critical migrant mobilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protracted liminality - Migration as a rite of passage - Borderscape as a heterotopia - Border materialities as trash and treasure - Affective aspects of the borderscape
Encountered Border Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inter/national borders - Infravisible urban borders as expressions of macro-level bordering processes - Symbolic, material and discursive bordering practices - Embodied borders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National maritime borders - Symbolic/cultural boundaries - Blurring of boundaries between different actors' border-induced experiences

Table 2: How the publications fit together. Continued on next page.

Paper 3	Paper 4 & Visual Project	Paper 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does border graffiti found within carceral and urban spaces across Lesvos indicate about the border-induced effects and affects on the lives of migrant and local communities diachronically? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What aspects of contemporary bordering processes are revealed through the traces of human and material 'waste' in Lesvos? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How is the Aegean borderscape constructed, enacted and contested in and what is the role of affect in these processes?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aegean border/scape - Graffiti - Affective & sensory geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Border materialities - Affect and senses - Aegean border/scape - Archaeology of undocumented migration & of affect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Border/scape in/visibility, materialities and temporalities - Affect and senses - Archaeology of undocumented migration & of affect - Aegean border/scape
Lesvos (Mytilene, Pagani, Moria)	Lesvos (Molyvos Lighthouse)	Lesvos
2004–2017	2015–2016	2015 & historical perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visual ethnography (photography) - Content & document analysis - Ex-detainee consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visual (auto)ethnography (photography and filmmaking) - Walking - Ethnographic fiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensory and visual ethnography (photography) - Informal interviews - Participant observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wall inscriptions (by migrants and activists) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refugees' objects - Researcher's personal experiences - Migrant narratives - Participant observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Researcher's personal experiences - Migrant- & other border actors' narratives - Participant observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban/carceral affects within borderscapes - Aegean affective borderscape - Border graffiti/art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social, material and affective aspects of the borderscape - Archaeogeography of irregular cross-border migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constitution, contestation and performance of the Aegean (affective) borderscape
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Im/material borders - Micro-level bordering within carceral/urban spaces - Macro-level inter/national borders & legal/political border discourses - Inter/intra group boundaries - Embodied borders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Symbolic, material and discursive bordering practices - Embodied borders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Symbolic, material, social, political, legal technological, historical and discursive aspects of bordering practices - In/visible borders - Embodied borders - Temporal borders

The five papers probe distinct but interrelated aspects of the interactions and mobilities of various human and non/more-than-human border actors as they navigate the geographical and sociopolitical complexities of the borderscape and the resulting generation and flow of affects at the southeastern margins of Europe. As such, these interactions and mobilities were traced through the collection of narratives and observations from a variety of border actors, summarised in row 6: 'Sources' of Table 2.

Each publication puts forth a number of theoretical concepts that, although drawing from existing scholarship, are enriched by the findings of the present research and consist unique contributions to the field (summarized in row 7: 'Theoretical Contributions' of Table 2). When considered jointly, these concepts supplement existing approaches to the borderscape concept and establish the foundations of the affective borderscape notion. Although the papers are grounded on similar theoretical foundations, which are largely cast upon the study of borders and borderscapes, migrant mobilities, and affect theory, their theoretical contributions speak to- and augment a broad range of cognate literatures and academic debates.

The various scales across which borderscapes manifest and link up are revealed through the material presented in these publications, as well as many of the symbolic and material forms and functions that the borderscape assumes (summarized in row 8: 'Encountered Border Aspects' of Table 2).

The combination of insights drawn from all previous publications renders the southeastern Mediterranean borderscapes as multidimensional landscapes whose meaning and significance are historically, spatially, and socially variable. They encompass the multiscalar borders that cut across them, they are affected by a range of internal or external parameters (social, legal, political, infrastructural, technological, environmental, cultural etc.), and they include a multitude of relationally-positioned human and non-human actors. Conceptualised as such, borderscapes incorporate the entire configuration of the effects and affects arising within them and are

thus imbued with historically variable significance, ambiance and affectivity.

Bodies, boundaries, belongings: Assembling the affective borderscape

Following the call for ‘more sophisticated theoretical vocabularies and imaginations’ to match the spatio-temporal transformation of borders (Minca and Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 767) and after having already identified in the preceding chapters the analytical potential of the borderscapes notion and the relatively untapped capacity of affect to indicate the connections between the personal/somatic, material/environmental and the political/social, this study puts forward the concept of affective borderscape as a complementary approach to bordering processes from a visceral perspective since, as Longhurst *et al.* assert:

the visceral...is about feeling, but is also about the relational and the random...using a visceral approach has the potential to inform geography and migration studies about the ways that bodily processes (internal and external) affect the formation of political subjectivities (2009, p. 335).

Using affect’s visceral approach from a geographic angle to explore the contestations arising along today’s proliferating borderlines can offer valuable insights on how seemingly unmoved (as in ‘inflexible’ but also as in ‘unperturbed’) formal institutional powers and supposedly marginal and minimally agentic individuals, such as migrants, are interrelated and mutually affected through the exertion of a broad range of sociospatially emplaced, day-to-day practices.

My previously elaborated working definition of borderscapes on page 49 in Chapter three conceptualized them as liminal, overlapping landscapes, which function as contact zones and as charged fields of interaction between shifting configurations of relationally-positioned animate and inanimate actors and the powers, materialities, logics and imaginaries that permeate them. To expand my interpretation into the realm of borderscapes’ affective geography and

materiality I find footing on the assertion by Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy that ‘memory, perception, cognitive thinking, historical experience, and other material relations and immaterial forces all intersect with individuals’ sensory grasp of the world’ (2008, p. 465) to determine the visceral politics of borders. Each of those individuals is emplaced within their own habitus⁴⁹ (Bourdieu, 1980), which includes its psychosocial/affective dimensions (Reay, 2015), as well as both a short- and a long-term scope of affective experiences within border spaces. The role of affective practices and ‘structures of feeling’ in this process is emphasized by Reynolds:

we need a sense of place... defined by contestations and differences that extend well beyond boundary lines. Places, whether textual, material, or imaginary, are constructed and reproduced not simply by boundaries but also by practices, structures of feeling and sedimented features of habitus (2004, p. 2).

Border actors’ dynamic interplay with the powers, materialities, socialities, rationalities, temporalities and imaginaries that permeate the borderscape results in the co-affectation of all elements involved and gives rise to such a ‘different’ sense of place, which is unhinged from purely spatial and Cartesian delimitations. Instead, it is coordinated through the longitudes and latitudes of circulating affects and their generation and flow between assemblages of border actors.

Affective borderscapes are thereby understood as emergent threshold spaces, where the surge, transmission and structuring of labile affects and somatic experiences between the broad range of actors that move, and are moved, within them are grasped and registered, with the purpose of serving as explanatory indicators regarding certain aspects of bordering, instead of being given short shrift. At the same time, the ways in which they affect individuals, collectivities

⁴⁹ Bourdieu’s (1980) understanding of habitus refers the lifestyle, values, dispositions and expectations of particular social groups that are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life.

and social structures are made intelligible, instead of remaining latent and unaccounted for, as is the case in purely rational/functional approaches to bordering.

As such, affective borderscapes become a lens that allows the exploration of borders not as singular lines, but as multidimensional sites of affective generation, investment and contestation through everyday practices, both those deemed momentous and the more mundane ones. Across the mesh of borderscape's demarcation lines, a range of affects and their preconscious, somatic grip – fear, hope, longing, desire, despair, indignation, disorientation, death or rebirth – converge and are implicated in various 'ordinary' and 'exceptional' encounters between migrants, locals, humanitarian volunteers, state officials, and the multitude of other individuals and collectivities who are un/willingly present and active within the borderscape. Along those interpersonal encounters, engagement and confrontation with diverse spatialities and materialities underpinning the overall ecology of those liminal landscapes also plays a crucial role and should be accounted for.

Within this space, the overarching structures of supra/national border- and migration regimes are also present, and they are actively engaged in the construction and emplacement of infra/structures of border control and securitization. These infra/structures refer both to actual material infrastructures (i.e. walls, fences, surveillance technologies), and to arrangements that operate in a similar manner at the *infra* (as in 'below')-*structural* plane – by which I refer to individuals' agency, affectivity and embodiment with regard to bordering processes. A plethora of affectively-bound communities are also present and active within the borderscape and are engaged in the resistance and contestation of higher-order bordering practices.

This study, therefore, focuses on unravelling the dynamics and intensities of emergent, 'bottom-up' affective practices and their aggregated political momentum, vis-à-vis the instrumental undertaking of 'affective engineering' in urban landscapes and beyond, which is 'gradually producing new forms of power as it goes' (Thrift, 2004, p. 68) for 'top-down' political expediency. These processes take

place within the recently hyperactivated southeastern European borderscape, which is understood as an area that condenses and exemplifies a wide range of contemporary geographical, historical, political, social, cultural, and economic strains and struggles.

Attention is given both to ‘high intensity’/‘exceptional’ affects – that burst out in headlines, breaking news and monumental commemorations – as well as to ‘low intensity’/‘ordinary’ ones – which remain internalised, personal and suffused within marginal spaces – while also suspending judgement and noting the ambiguity of those affects whose gravity and magnitude may have become routinized for some, while being simultaneously perceived as exceptional by others (i.e. attempting a perilous sea crossing, unhesitatingly turning someone else in to the police to save yourself, crossing a continent on foot carrying whoever is most precious to you on your back if need be).

As border scholars have been urged to ‘consider in greater depth the role that some borders play in conditioning the possibility of other borders’ (Walker, 2009), the choice of the specific location in the particular historical juncture, and the incorporation of its social, material and symbolic ecology to study the emergence of affective borderscapes is paradigmatic for drawing inferences between this and other frontiers globally, as well as regarding resulting border (re)formulations across the EU, both at its territorial peripheries and within its fragmented interior and the cores of its metropolises.

Revisiting the research question

As detailed on pages 27-28 of the Introduction, this thesis was guided by the following research question:

How are affective borderscapes constructed, enacted and contested in the southeastern Mediterranean region through the affective practices of various actors, and how do these processes manifest and link up at multiple scales across space and time?

In this research I have narratively and experientially collected a variety of ‘border affects’ and the social practices around them as they

transpired throughout the shores and hinterlands of the southeastern Mediterranean. This was done in order to explore and theorise the notion of affective borderscapes as a significant contribution to border and migration studies. This concept is proposed as a less-examined perspective on contemporary bordering processes and views affects as relational phenomena transpiring both from 'below' as well as 'from above' between multiple actors. Through their affectively-charged social practices those human and non-human actors are individually and collectively entangled in the establishment, enaction and reinforcement of the configurations of practices, powers, materialities, subjectivities and imaginations that comprise borderscapes, as well as in the contestation and translocation of their physical, symbolic and mental delimitations and effects.

More specifically, a variety of actors are involved in the construction, enaction and contestation of the Eastern Mediterranean/Aegean borderscape. This includes, on the one hand, a broad range of human actors who are positioned relationally vis-à-vis each other, either as individuals or as members of more, or less, loosely-bound collectivities, and whose exact positionality and disposition towards each other is open-ended and contingent upon the context in which they are embedded, rather than socially automated. Such human actors in this research included newly arrived border crossers (ir/regular migrants and refugees), receiving communities in urban and rural settings, some of whom face conditions of social precarity and marginalisation, a range of individuals engaged in humanitarian action (volunteers, activists and rescuers), and representatives of state authorities (border guards and police officers).

Since, however, this research has followed a 'new materialist' perspective (Ingold, 2007, 2012; Coole and Frost, 2010; Witmore, 2014) in the tracing of affect's accumulation and circulation not only between human subjects, but also between them and objects, these 'sensitive materialities' are included in the analysis as agentic actors. As previously mentioned, this materiality refers to, among others: border-crossing equipment, such as boats and life jackets; administrative documents, such as (counterfeit) passports, asylum registration claims, and residence permits; border crossers' personal objects

and mementos; technology and infrastructure of national border control and migrant containment; and a broad range of legal and political decisions and acts on bordering.

These objects are invested with meaning and affectivity, not only because they are attributed to them by their owners or users. In addition to that, I view them as carrying a latent affective potential, which is capable of stirring and mobilizing affectively-laden reactions in others upon being encountered. This capacity and its nuances, however, remain contingent to the objects' contextual signification within specific sociospatial settings. An example of this are the strong symbolisms of the orange lifejackets worn by refugees, and their unseaworthy boats that have been used in art installations, political demonstrations and even as everyday clothing accessories with the aim of touching and moving audiences around the world and make statements based on the objects' encapsulated affects⁵⁰. Even when physically extracted from their 'natural' locations and transplanted elsewhere, these items still condense and animate the borderscape's contradictory affects in remote locations, thereby extending and expanding its reach and effects across vast spatial and temporal distances.

Immaterial aspects of the borderscape, such as its spiritual/spectral/phantomic inhabitation are also entangled in the signification and creation of specific affective atmospheres across the borderscape. The most prominent among those signs relate to the haunting of the Mediterranean/Aegean Sea from the scores of people who

⁵⁰ Some of the most renowned examples include public installations of the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei who covered Berlin's Konzerthaus in refugee lifejackets from Lesbos during Berlin Film Festival in 2016 to commemorate drowned refugees (Said-Moorhouse, 2016), or stuffing 3.500 of them into Copenhagen's Kunsthall Charlottenborg's windows in 2017 (Kunsthall Charlottenborg, 2017), among many other similar installations he has undertaken. A more recent, and highly controversial, example includes Christoph Büchel's exposition of the rusted, pitted remains of a boat that sank in 2015 between Libya and Lampedusa causing the death of 700-1.100 migrants on board at the Arsénale, during the Venice Biennale in 2019 (Higgins, 2019). In 2016, an inflatable boat and several lifejackets from Lesbos were brought to Sweden and used during a protest during the annual political event 'Almedalsveckan' in Gotland (Baas, Svensson and Jakobson, 2016). In addition, several international volunteers from Lesbos would clad themselves in refugee lifejackets while travelling through airports or during demonstrations in their own countries to make a statement regarding the need to establish legal routes for refugees' safe passage to sanctuary, while parts of boats and lifejackets would be repurposed into bags, wallets etc. and be sold by various collectivities and individuals.

have lost their lives in their attempt to cross it and the repercussions this has had on the individual and collective sub/conscious of both migrant- and receiving communities; the intercultural mixing of folklore and traditions from different ethnic and religious contexts cautioning against evil water/sea spirits, that – according to participants’ testimonies – migrants often resorted to (such as holding makeshift boat-divination ceremonies, spilling oil to calm the sea and make the journey smoother, praying and holding their holy books and sacred amulets over its surface to exorcise the evil forces inside the rising waves). This invocation of abstract and immaterial entities – such as ghosts, spirits, and the affects they induce – materialises and manifests them as significant elements of borderscapes.

The integration of the relational and affectively-laden bordering processes, practices and events gives rise to affective borderscapes, which are understood as mobile spaces with blurry contours that have both material and immaterial aspects and encompass the interplay between a broad range of actors, as well as the accumulation of affect around and between them. Affects ‘stick’ and cluster thickly within those sites, and upon the bodies of all those that populate them, which causes affective borderscapes to appear denser and intensified around state borders. However, these affects and the spatialities they give rise to are only loosely connected to territorial delimitations. Instead, they manifest in a flickering manner across and beyond bounded national spaces. They defy territorial entrapment as they are not attached strictly to specific places. They impinge and embed themselves on different bodies, following them through space and triggering emotions, sensations, physical states and affective atmospheres. Their accumulation and transmission form a kind of ‘connective tissue’ across seemingly unrelated points in society, space and time.

The social and spatial features that comprise them are characterised by non-hierarchical multiscale: borderscapes, and their affective elements, can link processes taking place at the global scale with those at the local one, reaching down to the body as the ‘geography closest in’ (Rich, 1986), and also invert the pyramid of power implied by classic spatial scalar thought, where macro-level processes

are superior to micro-level ones. In the realm of social scales, too, affective borderscapes help bring together the personal and individual experience with collective histories and aligned mobilisations from across the globe. One such example that roughly encapsulates those inverted multiscale effects and affects is the unprecedented global impact (social and political but also in financial donations) that a single photo of a single drowned child (Aylan Kurdi) on a beach near Bodrum, Turkey in 2015, had in mobilizing and instrumentally channelling profound empathy and compassion, realigning discourse on refugees and even border policy on the ground at a global scale, in ways that countless other deaths never had (Slovic *et al.*, 2017; Sohlberg, Esaiasson and Martinsson, 2018).

This interscale and multilocal linkage despite borders' presumably divisive attributes occurs through a broad range of affective processes and practices (Wetherell, 2013, 2015) and affective transmissions (Brennan, 2004), which are understood as fundamentally social in origin but are physical/visceral and environmental/spatial in their effects and impacts. Irregular migrants' patterns and tactics of negotiating and manoeuvring urban borderscapes, is only one example of learning, linking and valorising a broad range of personal and social experiences from multiple locations and networks with the intention of keeping oneself safe, which, in turn, also affects patterns of urban mobility, visibility and usage of public spaces (preferring the night versus the day, using back streets versus central ones, choosing certain sidewalks instead of others, altering apartment façades or public square landscaping to reduce/increase visibility).

These practices are learned and perfected through community sharing, as well as through continuous practicing of one's skills to discern, decipher and bypass visible and invisible demarcation lines by being repeatedly exposed to different types of borders and boundaries along one's journey and developing a habitus of durable and transposable skills and dispositions. It is also manifested in migrants' psycho/somatic reactions to the shifting affective urban topography of safety and danger, fear and enjoyment, which indicates how individual and collective past encounters and practices around borders have actually become corporeal, embedding themselves in people's

bodies, minds and souls, and thereby shaping future conditions of mobility and social interactions for them.

These psycho/somatic reactions are not restricted to migrants, however. Individuals belonging to all groups included in this research reported having experienced directly or indirectly the lasting residual effects of border affects that still resonate and structure aspects of their lives: for one of the Navy Seal rescuers it is ‘November Rain’ – the song by Guns n’ Roses – which he used to listen on his headphones on repeat while on the helicopter to shipwreck scenes that immediately transports and almost transfixes him to those moments more than a decade later. For a Coast Guard officer it was jumping into the water to recover an unidentifiable bundle, suspecting it was drugs, that a smuggler threw overboard for distraction during an interception incident, and discovering it was someone’s wrapped-up week-old baby that made him ask to be urgently transferred to another office with land duties, away from Lesvos, where he remains to this day. Local ‘yiáyias’ – black-clad, white haired old women, some of whom have experiences of fleeing in search of refuge themselves – recall with a broad smile, yet sadness in their eyes, the times they held and took care of contemporary refugee women’s babies so their mothers could recompose themselves after arrival. International volunteers long for the times past, arrange reunions and re-hash events from 2015 like veterans talk about old wartime stories.

Potential applications and limitations of the affective borderscape concept

The concept of affective borderscapes has great potential to apply to the understanding and analysis of a wide range of bordering practices and processes, as described in this thesis. As spatialised understandings of borders are still prevalent, this concept allows the flexibility of going beyond the ‘territorial trap’ (Agnew, 1994; Reid-Henry, 2010) and explore internalised, embodied, mobile and ‘moving’ aspects of bordering, relinquishing the limitations imposed by the primarily spatialised logics that often prevail.

This notion can also help override dichotomised perceptions between neatly bordered subjectivities separated into ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Affects have the tendency to accumulate and condense around certain symbolic figures, objects, and events (such as refugees and asylum seekers, seawashed trash, and 'illegal' migration) thereby attributing them certain significations and positioning them along a hierarchy of social and cultural value and belonging. At the same time, they have the capacity to bypass and often subvert those cognitive divisions through affects' contagious flow and compulsive force that can startle people and sweep them along in unexpected configurations of 'affective communities' that are constituted through, and distinguished by, collective forms of feeling (Hutchison, 2016). By the same token, however, as affects speak directly to the body, they can also be 'engineered' and instrumentalised politically so that when they are triggered, they can override subjectivity for the sake of political expediency and effectuate the 'generalised biopolitical' dynamics of bordering (Vaughan-Williams, 2009b, 2009a).

Exploring affective borderscapes through personal narratives and experiences can also help to further destabilise the still prevalent conception of migration as a phenomenon whose main driving forces are rational 'push and pull' dynamics and 'supply and demand' factors. Instead, they reveal a broad range of affectively and emotionally-driven motives, culturally-sensitive nuances, and diametrically different dispositions towards geographic space that may force, or compel, people to move across borders.

The concept of affective borderscapes is, thereby, designed to address certain weaknesses concerning current theoretical accounts on bordering and offer an original contribution to the field by expanding the ways we think, feel, and think about borders. Notwithstanding its possibilities, however, it is intended to be applied in conjunction with complementary border theories, incorporating any future advancements in the fields of border/migration studies and affect theory, and not as a replacement to them.

A number of limitations regarding the interpretation and impact of this study's findings due to certain particularities pertaining to its research design and data collection process have already been mentioned on pages 104-106 in Chapter four. The concept of affective

borderscapes, as a newly proposed notion, is also subject to certain limitations in itself, as this research is based on material that results from distinct sociogeographic and political conditions playing out within a particular location ruled by specific inter/supra/national authorities in a historical juncture of singular magnitude. Potential bias thereby exists, as in nearly all research, which might limit the findings' relevance and applicability in other geographical/temporal settings, especially in other contexts and countries which might be imbued with different regulatory and sociocultural structures towards irregular migration and borders in general, or which might be viewed more favourably by irregular border crossers as places of settlement and livelihood pursuit, rather than as areas of transit, incarceration, or lock-in. Lack of previous research on the specific topic, which would provide solid theoretical foundations for the research question under investigation was an additional challenge. This inherent ambiguity of exploratory research, however, has the potential to become one of its core strengths, too, as will be explained in the upcoming section on the strengths and significance of this study.

Theoretical and practical implications and significance of the affective borderscape concept

This research has indicated the various ways in which individuals' and states' approach to borders – namely how they attempt to challenge, control, bypass or safeguard them – extends beyond typical understandings of the domains in which those processes take place – the physical locations, their mechanisms and processes, their scope and temporal duration. Significant shifts regarding the way borders are constructed, enacted and contested relationally among shifting constellations of situated human and non-human actors have been identified in this study. By reorienting attention towards the affective processes that are either generated within- or aiming towards persons (migrant or not) who simultaneously and variously affect and are being affected by borders, we observe that the effects and affects of the sovereign act of border control and governance are not limited to those who have crossed (or intend to cross) a state's territorial border. Instead, a variety of other bodies are also impacted, while they are un/intentionally present across the dispersed locations

within which borderscaping processes manifest and which, as mentioned before, can be found both in the vicinity of- as well as far-removed from the edges of nation-states.

This has implications for the definition of contemporary supra/national bordering processes. In the case of Greece and the EU, these processes are officially presented by the institutions that are endowed with the respective authority, such as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), as aiming to safeguard the effective application and coordination of high, strict, and uniform levels of control, which is undertaken after ensuring that proper protocols and procedures are followed, based on confirmed best practices and in line with the EU fundamental rights charter, while those carrying them out are expected to conform to codes of conduct revolving around the respect of human rights and the right to international protection (FRONTEX, 2018d).

If, however, these processes are not taking place in the ways they have been proclaimed to – as the human and material traces of irregular migration on the ground and their profound affective resonances diachronically reveal through the material collected for this research – then the understanding and definition of those processes and of the authorities in whose name these practices are undertaken also need to be revisited and redefined. States should not be conceived as entities that are diametrically ‘other’ to the collective emotions that underpin them: their formation and maintenance or dissolution is not only based on rational, neutral and morally-blind principles. As both existing theory and this study’s empirical material reveals, states and their agencies are ‘peopled’ and personified entities. Aside from all other processes that animate them, they are also brought into being through embodied and emotional practices (Militz and Schurr, 2016).

As such, state building practices, an aspect of which border security and enforcement is, generate and distribute a range of affects across the whole realm of the socialities and materialities that comprise them. Due to affects’ previously mentioned nature as both a noun and a transitive verb which ‘simultaneously makes both its subject

and its object' (Richard and Rydnyckyj, 2009, p. 59), and which 'produces those who enact it and those upon whom it acts' (ibid., p. 62), the violent, angst-ridden, humiliating, frightful and life-endangering dynamics through which contemporary bordering routinely operates can also be conceived as reflections and as qualifiers of the very same supra/national entities that enact them.

The concept of affective borderscapes bears important implications not just for knowledge mobilisation and the development of more cutting-edge research, but also for policy and practice. Firstly, more human-centered migration- and border policies need to be formulated and effectuated. Secondly, the research findings in which the suggested concept is steeped call for the amelioration of services aiming to improve the conditions and psychosomatic effects of bordering faced by migrants, refugees, and other individuals that are in/directly affected by those processes – activists, volunteers, rescuers, locals, border and police officers, who are just as impacted. New forms of advocacy are also necessary, which would better cater for the needs of all those individuals and groups.

Regarding the previously mentioned limitations of the affective borderscape concept, it is important to mention that although this thesis consists of several smaller-scale case studies, with all the implications that their delimitation necessarily entails, the findings have nevertheless significant applicability outside the geographical/sociopolitical confines of the specific case studies. Moreover, three significant challenges that have been briefly touched upon previously that surprisingly metamorphosed into the most important assets of this study ought to be reiterated. The first one pertains to the daunting polysemy of the notion of affect and the hyper-fragmentation of the theories on it. The second one refers to the striking lack of prior research on this topic (aside from a handful of studies addressing certain isolated aspects of geographic affects and borders), which I have tried to bring in dialogue and interweave in my work. Thirdly, the 'methodological nightmare', as Wetherell aptly describes it and I wholeheartedly agree, of disambiguating and researching affect 'that creates some formidable and unnecessary blocks for empirical research' (2015, p. 152). Combined, these three challenges called for

the development of a novel research typology and required venturing into uncharted waters, from which these findings have been drawn. The identification of a significant gap in existing literature with no certain pathway to safe conclusions, therefore, can be considered one of the most important knowledge contributions of this research, together with its efforts to address it through distinctive theoretical and methodological approaches and the suggestion of original terminology, which has potential to enrich future research.

While the concept of affective borderscapes is grounded in data collected from a particular geographical area, and among specific groups of border actors, it may still be able to offer important insights and account for a wider range of bordering practices among diverse actors around the world. I would suggest that applying the concept in pertinent research at other border locations and exploring the experiences and narratives of various bordered, and border-embodying bodies would uncover the term's strengths and weaknesses more clearly over time. Such studies would enrich the body of knowledge that the present research has pointed towards and would have significant contributions to make in cognate fields.

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APPENDIX I – PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

**Research project title: Emplacement, Displacement, Mobility and Immobility:
Undocumented African Border Crossings to Europe.**

I agree to take part in the above University of Malmö research project carried out by the Ph.D. student Ioanna Tsoni. I have had the project explained to me. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- be interviewed by the researcher;
- allow the interview to be recorded.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.

I consent to the use of sections of the recorded interview in publications.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Swedish Research Board's Code of Ethics.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX II – LIST OF MAIN INTERLOCUTORS

To protect participant's anonymity and confidentiality of information shared their names have been substituted by pseudonyms and their biographical information has been slightly altered.

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

1	Michel - 'Canada', male, 28 Guinea	Arrived in Greece in 2010. Had petty jobs. Filled one of the migration journals. Currently in Greece.
2	Oumar , male, 25 Guinea	Arrived in Greece in 2009. His father was a University professor in Guinee, who got assassinated. He wished to pursue higher education. Left Greece for Belgium, where he got his documents, got married, and completed his degree in Social Work. Filled one of the migration journals.
3	Nesta , male, 26 Guinea	Active member of the Guinean Association in Greece. Also active in several organisations in support of migrants' rights. Wished to pursue a football career.
4	Abdulai , male, 17 Sierra Leone	War orphaned, left Sierra Leone when he was 15, arrived in Greece and lived with a small group of older countrymen, worked collecting trash. Left Greece for Germany where he was placed with a family and started going to school.
5	Austin , male, 28 Nigeria	One of my first interlocutors, avid football player. Left Greece in 2013 and now lives in Germany working as a waiter.
6	Daniel , male, 32 Ghana	I met him through Austin, he wished to go to the UK where one of his sisters lived. He died in Greece in 2013 and his body was

		left unclaimed at the morgue as no one knew how to let his family know.
7	Badara , male, 41 Guinea	Arrived in Greece in 2001 and worked in the shipbuilding industry. He left his wife and daughter in Greece in 2014 and travelled to France irregularly with the hope of obtaining documents and bringing them along too. So far this has not been possible.
8	Lamine , male, 33 Guinea	Married to Betty , with whom he has two sons. He ran Baita Mini Market, one of the hubs of social life for African migrants in Athens. Was falsely accused for drug trafficking through his shop, was arrested and spent several years in prison. Got recently released and works in a phone repair shop in Athens.
9	Murphy , male, 24 Democratic Republic of Congo	When we met he was just sent away from an unaccompanied minor's shelter, as he had supposedly turned 18, even though his real age was 24. Travelled out of Greece with fake documents. Lives in France, attends school and plays football in the local team. Filled one of the migration journals.
10	Dura , male, 19 Sierra Leone	In Greece for several years when I met him. He had travelled and lived together with his younger cousin. Was the 'trusted boy' for all kinds of jobs others needed to do. Left Greece in 2013 on foot through the Balkan Route. Now lives in Germany.
11	Marck , male, 39 Sierra Leone	Had arrived in Greece through Japan (!) after several unsuccessful attempts to fly to other countries and get a visa. Left Greece via the Balkan Route and was imprisoned for a long time in Serbia.
12	Abdulrahman , 35 The Gambia	Cousin of Rahman , had a 'paper marriage' with a Greek woman to get a passport. Worked occasionally as a smuggler from Greece to other EU countries and started an import-export business of second hand goods and cars from Europe to Gambia
13	Betty , female, 37 Ethiopia	Married to Lamine . In Greece for several years, had a son prior to meeting Lamine

		but her boyfriend travelled to another European country and left her without a sign. Lives in Greece and recently gave birth to her third son.
14	Rahman , male, 26 The Gambia	Cousin of Abdulrahman . He died after losing his way in a forest in Montenegro while trying to follow the Balkan Route in the early days of this path. His body was never found.
15	Mohamed , male, 24 Guinea	He had arrived in Greece by crossing Évro river in the North. Had some petty jobs, met a French girl online, got married to her and now lives in France.
16	Didi , female, 27 Mali	Worked as a hairdresser from home, where she lived with two other females from her country. Had one child that was growing up with her family in Mali.
17	Susan , female, , 23 Nigeria	I was introduced to her by another participant when she was in urgent need of gynaecological medical care and she did not know where she had to go so I accompanied her to a hospital and met several times with her thereafter. Left Greece with fake documents in 2014.
18	Kassory , male, 35 Guinea	One of the prominent members of the Guinean community in Greece. Married to a retiree from Germany. He lived in Athens and his wife in Germany. She often visited and they went on all-inclusive holidays together.
19	Zarif , male, 33 Afghanistan	He was in Greece for 5 years when I met him, spoke fluent Greek and aspired to become a film director. Still lives in Athens.
20	Gholam , male, 35 Afghanistan	In Greece for several years, worked as an interpreter for a refugee advocacy NGO. Still lives in Athens.
21	Chaman , male, 28 Afghanistan	He was functionally blind and had travelled from Afghanistan guided by two of his friends. He was a talented musician and built his own instruments. Got smuggled out of Greece and is now married and just got a baby boy.

22	Rahmat , male, 32 Afghanistan	In Greece through Lesbos since 2008, he was one of my students when I taught English for an NGO. Talented photographer and fully integrated in the Greek society. Lives Athens.
23	Reza , male, 24 Afghanistan	Worked as a cook in a casino to finance his studies at a private cooking school. Arrived in Greece through Samos in 2005. Lives in Athens.
24	Asadi , male, 28 Afghanistan	Arrived in Greece when he was 16, was imprisoned in Paganí and upon release he stayed in an unaccompanied minors' shelter in Lesbos at first and then remained on the island. He then moved to Germany, where he works as an interpreter for a state organisation. He has helped with translations from Dari and Farsi for this research.
25	Clement , male, 35 Democratic Republic of Congo	He was the priest of the unofficial church of Congolese migrants in Athens for about a year when I met him in 2012. Left Greece with fake documents and now lives in France, where he got married. Filled one of the migration journals.
26	Hamza , male, 35 Syria	He used to hang out at Plateía Amerikís in 2016 and we had several conversations when I happened to be around.
27	Fateme , female, 36 Afghanistan	Arrived with her two daughters through Samos and lived in Athens doing petty jobs and trying to save up for a smuggler to take her and her children out of Greece
28	Rosemary , female, 55 Tanzania	She owned a clothes store near Plateía Amerikís and also served as an unofficial 'banker', keeping the money and valuables that other migrants did not want, or could not keep at home.
29	Juma , male, 41 Tanzania	In Athens for more than a decade when we met, and still lives there. Talented visual artist who painted traditional African artwork and sold them on the streets or took commissions to create shop signs and murals.

30	Henry , male, 20 Sudan	We met in 2013 when I visited the abandoned factory in Pátras that refugees squatted while trying to hide under the lorries that travelled with the ferries to Italy. We stayed in touch online. He was disabled but still managed to smuggle himself out of Greece and now lives in the UK where he finished school with honours.
31	Billo , male, 16 Guinea	He lived in a shelter for unaccompanied minors in Athens and went to school. As one of the youngest members of the Guinean community he was 'protected' by everyone else. Got smuggled out of Greece and now lives in Germany.
32	Bahib , male, 27 Sierra Leone	Arrived in Greece through Lesvos in 2010. Aspired to become a basketball player and practiced every day. Was smuggled out of Greece in 2016 and now lives in France.
33	Kerfalla , male, 35 Guinea	He had managed to come to Greece after several unsuccessful attempts to get visa and/or the funds to pay a smuggler. Was trained as a carpenter and worked some odd jobs occasionally.
34	Ismael , male, 32 Burkina Faso	Arrived in Greece in 2009 and worked in the shipbuilding industry. Had two children back in Ouagadougou and sent money and presents to them often.
35	Sunday , male, 29 Nigeria	Aspired to become a football player and went to tryouts for local teams. Got the right fake documents after a couple of unsuccessful attempts to leave Greece and now lives in Germany.
36	Dominique , male, 34 Burkina Faso	Had an arranged marriage for 8.000 euros to a Polish girl to get documents. Worked as a smuggler and lived between Athens, Warsaw and Amsterdam.
37	'Vieux Pere' , male 56 Burkina Faso	One of the oldest members of the Burkinabe community, hence the nickname 'old father'. He worked in construction, had a family back in Burkina Faso and returned there in 2013, when the financial crisis made it hard for him to work consistently.

38	Flani , male, 17 Ivory Coast	Arrived in Greece when he was 14, lived at a shelter for unaccompanied minors and went to school. Still lives in Athens.
39	Mutu , male, 21 Democratic Republic of Congo	Arrived in Greece in 2010, lived at a shelter for unaccompanied minors at first and graduated school. Still lives in Athens and plays football for a local team.
40	Aziz , male, 27 Afghanistan	Arrived in Greece through Lesvos as an unaccompanied minor, where he was first imprisoned in Paganí and then lived for several years at a shelter. Still lives there and works as an interpreter for different NGOs active in the local refugee camps.
41	'Papito' , male, 33 Angola	In Greece for 2 years when we met, travelled the Balkan route on foot in 2012 and now lives with his German girlfriend in Berlin
42	Lamarana , male, 39 Guinea	He worked at Lamine's shop for several years and also arranged the forging and selling of travel documents as an extra job. Left Greece in 2014.
43	Dakhadi , male, 31 Guinea	Football player
44	Theophile , male, 35 Burkina Faso	In Greece for several years, has a son, is fully integrated and has purposefully moved away from Plateia Amerikis to be more 'like a Greek'. Works in a phone marketing company
45	Layla , female, 28 Sudan	We met in 2012 on Lesvos where she lived at a local reception facility with her boyfriend who got severely injured when he fell from the boat that carried them from Turkey to Greece. Now lives in Norway

BORDER GUARDS AND POLICE OFFICERS

1	Alex, Captain of Hellenic Coast-guard Vessel , male, 42
Lesvos | Coast Guard Lieutenant. Died in 2018. |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|

2	Anonymous Captain of Hellenic Coastguard Vessel, 35, male Piraeus & Lesvos	Coast Guard Lieutenant of a vessel that participated in the FRONTEX fleet, who agreed to participate anonymously and met with me twice, in Piraeus and Lesvos.
3	Anonymous Mechanic of Hellenic Coastguard Vessel, 30, male Piraeus & Lesvos	Coast Guard officer of the previously mentioned Hellenic Coastguard/FRONTEX vessel who was present and participated in the informal conversations I had with the Captain of the vessel in Piraeus and Lesvos.
4	Costas, male, 37 Lesvos & Athens	Former Navy Seal who had participated in rescues of refugee boat shipwrecks during his service time. Currently working as a salesman for a nutritional supplements company
5	Anonymous Hellenic Coastguard officer, male, 25 Mytiléne – Lesvos	Administrative staff at the Coast Guard headquarters in Mytiléne with whom I had several informal conversations over several visits to the island.
6	Angelos, male, 55 Sparti	Retired Hellenic Coastguard officer who had served on Lesvos.
7	Nikos, male, 25 Athens	Police officer in a central police station in Athens that reported directly to FRONTEX. Discriminated against at his workplace due to standing up for migrant detainees' rights.
8	Giorgos, male, 36 Mytiléne – Lesvos	Police officer in Mória, responsible for the unaccompanied minors' section.
9	Sotiris, male, 25 Athens	Former Golden Dawn supporter who withdrew from the organization. I was introduced to him through Costas (former Navy Seal).

VOLUNTEERS, ACTIVISTS AND RESCUERS DURING THE REFUGEE 'CRISIS' (GREEK AND INTERNATIONAL)

1	Marcel, male, 37 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Volunteer with a humanitarian NGO from Switzerland.
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2	Elena , female, 34 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Volunteer with a lifeguard association from Athens – Greece.
3	Kristoffer , male, 25 Eftalou – Lesvos	Volunteer with a medical assistance NGO from Stockholm – Sweden.
4	Simon , male, 36 Mytiléne – Lesvos	Independent volunteer from Thessaloniki – Greece.
5	Dimitris , male, 30 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Volunteer with a lifeguard association from Athens – Greece.
6	Amir , male, 32 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Volunteer with a search & rescue Danish-NGO.
7	Stella , female, 28 (online)	Volunteer with an online network for the co-ordination of refugee boat rescue.
8	Silvia , female, 30 (online)	Volunteer with an online network for the co-ordination of refugee boat rescue.
9	Jaqueline , female, 24 (online)	Volunteer with an online network for the co-ordination of refugee boat rescue.
10	Juliette , female, 40 Mytiléne – Lesvos	Volunteer at a donation storage and distribution facility.
11	Trevor , male, 60 Mytiléne – Lesvos	Independent volunteer from Canada.
12	Leanne , female, 35 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Volunteer with a humanitarian NGO.
13	Fred , male, 49 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Head of a humanitarian NGO.

14	Sofia , female, 28 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Volunteer with a lifeguard association from Athens - Greece.
15	Melissa , female, 26 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Independent volunteer from Germany.
16	Joaquin , male, 38 Eftalou - Lesvos	Volunteer with a humanitarian NGO from Norway.
17	Amir , male, 35 Idoméni	Former asylum seeker from Afghanistan, Independent volunteer in Idoméni.
18	Ben , male, 22 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Volunteer with a humanitarian NGO from the UK.
19	Harry , male, 38, Platanos - Lesvos	Volunteer at a self-organised search and rescue initiative, from Athens- Greece.
20	Zarif , male, 41 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Head of a medical assistance NGO from the United States.
21	Thor , male, 60 Mólyvos - Lesvos	Volunteer from Norway.
22	Bassam , male, 37 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Volunteer from the United States.
23	Thanasis , male, 36 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Volunteer from Athens.
24	Marcy , female, 34 Mória - Lesvos	Volunteer from England.
25	Sheila , female, 40 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Volunteer nurse with a medical assistance NGO from the United States.

26	Anton , male, 38 Mólyvos – Lesvos	Photojournalist from Greece.
27	Andrew , male, 34 Mólyvos Lighthouse - Lesvos	Filmographer from England.

LOCAL INHABITANTS IN ATHENS AND LESVOS

1	Eva , female, 45 Mólyvos – Lesvos	French language teacher, unemployed, rents out a bedroom to volunteers.
2	Fish market lady , 60 Mytiléne – Lesvos	Random encounter at the fish market of Mytiléne who made a comment about the local fish potentially feeding off drowned refugees.
3	Stratos , male, 53 Mólyvos – Lesvos	Local fisherman who has rescued several refugees with his boat.
4	Giannis , male, 36, Kalloni – Lesvos	Local shop owner, author and one of the most prominent volunteers in the local community.
5	Alex , male, 56, Petra – Lesvos	Former stock broker in Hong Kong who returned to his hometown, was shocked by the ongoing refugee ‘crisis’ and gradually became one of the main coordinators of rescue operations across the island.
6	Phaedra , female, 55 Eftalou – Lesvos	Originally from the UK, lives on the island for several years and has an art workshop. Very active in refugee rescue and assistance locally. Has been receiving abuse from other locals because of her involvement.
7	Kate , female, 61 Mytiléne – Lesvos	Senior member of the Red Cross, , also helping the Hellenic Coast Guard and the Hellenic Rescue Team

8	Mariza , female, 40 Mólyvos – Lesbos	Restaurant owner, active in refugee assistance. Like Phaedra , also receiving abuse from other locals for her activity.
9	Efi , female, 45 Athens	Friend of Alex . Works at a café in central Athens and coordinates refugee donations to the island
10	Maria , female, 40 Athens	Lives in Plateía Amerikís and shops regularly from Lamine's shop.
11	Diomedes , male, 32 Athens	Lives in central Athens and plays football with the group of asylum seekers

APPENDIX III – DECLARATION OF CO-AUTHORSHIP

Full name of the PhD student: **IOANNA WAGNER TSONI**

This declaration concerns the following article/manuscript:

Title: Writings on the wall: textual traces of transit in the aegean borderscape
Authors Wagner Tsoni, Ioanna; Karlsson Franck Anja

The article/manuscript is: Published ☒ Accepted ☐ Submitted ☐ In preparation ☐

If published, give full reference: **Wagner Tsoni, I., Karlsson-Franck A. (2019). ‘Writings on the wall: Textual traces of transit in the Aegean borderscape’. *Borders in Globalisation Review*, 1(1), pp.9-23.**

If accepted or submitted, give journal:

Has the article/manuscript previously been used in other PhD or doctoral dissertations?
No ☒ Yes ☐ If yes, give details:

The PhD student has contributed to the elements of this article/manuscript as follows:

- A - No or little contribution
- B - Has contributed (10-30 %)
- C - Has contributed considerably (40-60 %)
- D - Has done most of the work (70-90 %)
- E - Has essentially done all the work

Element	Extent (A-E)
	C
1. Formulation/identification of the problem	
2. Planning of the fieldwork and methodology design and development	D
3. Involvement in the fieldwork/empirical study	E
4. Interpretation of the results	D
5. Writing of the first draft of the manuscript	E
6. Finalization of the manuscript and submission	E

Signatures of the co-authors

Date	Name	Signature
July 1, 2019	IOANNA WAGNER TSONI
September 10, 2019	ANJA KARLSSON FRANCK

Date: September 10, 2019

Signature of the PhD student

I

AFRICAN BORDER-CROSSINGS IN A
'CITY OF OTHERS':
CONSTELLATIONS OF IRREGULAR
IM/MOBILITY AND IN/EQUALITY
IN THE EVERYDAY URBAN ENVIRONMENT
OF ATHENS

IOANNA TSONI
Malmö University

This paper ethnographically explores the border-crossing experience of sub-Saharan African migrants in Athens. The everyday social visibility and spatial mobility of migrants in the city is viewed through a critical phenomenological perspective centering on irregularity and border-crossing as a lived experience which, in times of financial crisis, is shared by other vulnerable urban dwellers beyond the migrant/non-migrant dichotomy. The salience of such practices for current discourses and policies concerning migration, urban public space, citizenship and identity in a series of socio-political scales is explored. As migrants' im/mobility and in/visibility intersect with emerging, crisis-induced patterns of social in/equality in Greece, they become strategic actors who construct new understandings of self and other, indicate emergent political and social configurations, and daily reassert their 'right to the city' in the 'city of Others'.

Introduction

In an effort to strongly highlight the border- and boundary-crossing experience of irregular sub-Saharan African migrants in crisis-ridden Greece—a situated experience that is possibly quite distant from the perceptions, and even the imaginations, of 'bona fide' citizens elsewhere in the world—this paper opens with an extensive excerpt from the handwritten journal of one of the research participants, Michel.

This 'reverse' approach to academic writing, although uncommon, is an effective heuristic device which helps to convey meaning in a thickly descriptive manner in an individual's own words. No amount of scholarly translation by the researcher could make up for the density of information and the emotional power instilled in such a text. As King *et al.* (1998)

succinctly put it in their paper ‘A migrant’s story: from Albania to Athens’, which similarly uses as a foundation the first-hand account of a single Albanian migrant in Greece: ‘Above all, we wish to stress the power and immediacy of the individual’s testimony—part of a growing appreciation in migration studies of the simple technique of listening directly and empathetically to the voices of migrants themselves’ (1998: 159).

Here the powerful story of Michel is foregrounded. This is his personal story, which he wrote himself in his ‘migration journal’ (a method that is explained in detail later on). A few selected participants in my research on African migrants in Athens were asked to record their impressions of the journey they have been on and Michel is one of them. His story is offered as a backdrop, setting the scene for the theoretical points to be raised in the paper.

Michel’s street name is ‘Canada’, a name which was given to him by his friends because of his strong wish to visit Canada one day. He lives in Kypseli, a centrally located and densely populated neighbourhood of Athens with a very high concentration of African immigrants. More specifically, he lives around *Platia Amerikis* (America Square), a small square in Kypseli where many irregular migrants gather. Indicative of that is the way in which my African participants would refer to the square jokingly as ‘*Platia Afrikis*’ (Africa Square) since ‘There are no Americans there, only Africans!’. His native tongues are Pular and French; however, he chose to write in English, which he learnt by himself ‘on the road’. Minimal grammatical corrections have been made for the sake of readability.

The Story

My name is Michel. I am 28 years old. I am a Guinean by nationality. I left my country to Greece to seek human protection for spiritual and political reasons, unknowing that Greece is the worse. I went from Guinea to Sierra Leone, from there to Egypt, from Egypt to Syria, from Syria to Turkey. I entered in Greece 2010: by ship to Turkey and from Turkey to Greece by foot. When I entered I was arrested by the Greek police at the border from Turkey to Greece. I was locked up in prison for a week. They released me and later took me to Alexandroupoli, where they gave me paper and told me that I must leave the country within 30 days. I was at Alexandroupoli for 4 days sleeping outside because there was no money to pay for transport to Athens. When I was in Alexandroupoli I was sleeping in a *platia* for 4 days where a Greek guy asked me my problems and later helped me by buying me food and bought me a ticket to Athens after I had explained my

problems to him. While I was there, some Greeks were laughing at me and my friends because of our condition at that time. We were 4 in number. Me and my friends were begging for food. During the process some people cooperated and some didn't, and even mocking at us. Looking us with some kind of low eyes. Sometimes they can even use some words and pointing fingers at us by saying '*kita mavro*' meaning 'look at blacks'.

I arrived in Athens at 6 a.m. in the morning at Omonia. I did not know anything and anyone back then. Now I know Omonia is where the drug dealers are in concord with the junkies, the police is in concord with the drug dealers, the pimps with the prostitutes, the prostitutes with the immigrants. Omonia! When I was standing I saw some black people on the bus and I took the next bus with this direction. I came to Kypseli. I was at the park till 2 p.m. when I saw one guy from Sudan who took me to Platia Amerikis where I was introduced to some Guineans who later took me to their house. When I reached in the house where they took me I was asked to pay a sum of 80 euros before they can allow me in. The sorriest part was I entered with 10 euros in Athens. So I told them that I had no money with me, and they didn't accept me and they threwed me out.

After I went to a demolish house just to find shelter to sleep cause I couldn't sleep out because of rain and cold. I met some guys in the place where I went to shelter myself. We were living there as family, as friends, though sometimes we used to have little quarrels. I was there with these guys managing life together. They took me to many places where we used to have free food. These places were very far from where we live. These places were located in different areas with different times. The first place was at 9 a.m., the other place was 11 a.m., the other was at 6 p.m. and the last place was 8 p.m. At those places there were many people, also Greek, old and young, that were also sleeping out like us because of the economy in Greece is bad now. They would tell us where to go to get free clothes or shoes and things like that. Sometimes we used to go to all of these places, while sometimes we only go to some of them. Like the place where I used to go in the morning (9 a.m.) I woke up at 6 a.m. to prepare in order to reach early cause sometimes if we are late we will get there and everything is finish and return back home with no food. Sometimes we used to fight for food at the places where we used to go for food.

At the demolish house where I lived it was very cold inside and there was a lot of water right under our beds during raining time. That means when it rains no sleeping and the place was smelling. No water, neither toilet in the demolish house where I lived. We used to go out at night, that is around 3 a.m. in search of water at the platia cause we were afraid of the

people not to call police for us and not to accuse us of stealing water. Sometimes we can stay for a week with no bath cause the water was very cold, no heater to heat it. And sometimes when we wash with the cold one we get sick, but we just have to because we could not stay without bathing. Sometimes I used to go out at night to pick or look for empty bottle and sell them to the Pakistan shop in order to make money to buy calling cards and for other needs. After one year, I decided to leave the demolish house where I lived and rent a shoplike house—just an old store—because it was very cheap. I started going to dustbin (*skoupidia*) to look for old stuff that has been condemned by others, and sell them in the market in the street (*laiki*) every week where everyone goes to buy groceries in order to make some money. Sometimes I have two euro, or three euro and I buy my food. I was on this (picking bottle at nite and going for *skoupidia* (*karochi*) during the day.¹

Greek people are very bad people, they never love black or foreigner, even when we are finding something in the dirtybox, Greek people are very racist, they shout on us and if you don't go they will call police and the police never asks you for what happened. They just take you to the jail. Maybe you stay there 3 months, or 6 months. And the way the police people treating us like animals, and most of the people in Greece, they take us like animals. We the Black, we are not animals. We are a human being like them. Or when we are riding in bus, if you will sit down with them they will leave the chair next to you and will go far from you or they will shout on you and embarrass you and if you want to argue with them they will call police and the police will never ask you what is wrong, they will just take you to the station and detain you.

And after some months I stop picking bottle and continue with the *skoupidia* work. I leaved the shop where I was and rented a room with my friend. We decided to stay there. Sometime, when I was on my *karochi* work people used to laugh at me and the police sometimes they disturb me by asking me for paper unnecessarily and sometimes they can even take me with them and left my *karochi* there. They have done that many times to me which pissed me off. But there is nothing I can do about it cause the problem is that any time they catch me, I lost my *karochi*. Any time they leave me I have to start all over by searching for another *karochi*. I usually feel very bad about that. Sometimes after filling my *karochi* to go and sell to the Pakistan or the *Yifto*² they catched me on the way and lost everything. That means all my effort have wasted. As a result, I decided to stopped and going out to search for job. I was on that for over 3 months searching. Fortunately I found a job to wash cars (*plintirio*). But the salary was very

small and the boss always insulted me by calling me fool (*vlaka*, *poutana* and *malaka*) which was very embarrassing and I felt very bad. I left that job and decided to look for another one. After, I got another one that is to work in a restaurant (three times per week). I love this one because the boss and others that work there are very nice people. Since then, life change a bit for me. I am better than before, though the embarrassment is still the same (I mean the police). I pray to be further successful so I can one day go back and to help the development of my country. I am black, and I am proud, I have Jesus in my heart, Martin Luther King in my mind and Malcolm X in my arms. We hope and pray that things will become better some day.

CANADA

Research Methodology

This paper presents some results arising from my eighteen months of exploratory fieldwork among African migrants in the centre of Athens and beyond. Migrant journeys have been followed onwards and backwards in time and space through the elicitation of personal narratives, supplemented by mobile and creative methods. Taken together, this material renders visible the hidden geographies of everyday b/order crossings at the south-eastern borderlands of Europe.

From Ethnography to Autoethnography

Ethnography and qualitative methodologies are the most appropriate for eliciting the perspectives and experiences of marginalised populations in situations of social precariousness and for evoking dense and textured representations of their everyday lives. Irregular migration flows and border controls are complex phenomena calling for increased attention. In this context the role of ethnography is crucial in 'sensitizing not only anthropologists and other social scientists, but also policymakers, politicians and broader publics to the complicated, often anxiety-ridden and frightening realities of illegality within specific host society contexts and in comparative terms across the globe' (Willen 2007a: 10).

Since the early stages of this research, the challenge of finding a narrative style that would grant freedom of expression and embrace the totality of my respondents' experience, as well as mine, while maintaining academic credibility, became evident. Ethnographic methodologies, although indicated for research on migration and borders, could not entirely encompass the

way in which I had engaged with, and been affected by, my fieldwork. I needed to develop a form of narrative that could embrace the vulnerable sides of both the researched and the researcher alike, making the writing of this account meaningful not just as a piece of scientific text, but as a complete human experience. The systematic ‘sociological introspection’ that autoethnography advocates (Ellis 2004) reconciled most aspects of my research, while encompassing the experiences of all participants—myself included. Moreover, it allowed space for me to write an emotionally saturated, evocative account of my observations. The masterful example of the autoethnographic ‘illegal’ border-crossing narrative of Khosravi (2010) provided excellent guidance, as well as scholarly and moral encouragement to endorse a similar narrative style.

Border Narratives

Throughout my fieldwork, ‘migrant border narratives’ have been observed, recorded and collaboratively mapped. These are testimonies of mobility and fixity, stories of how undocumented migrants got ‘here’ and why. They are accounts of what types of border and boundary, visible and invisible, and of what scales, had to be crossed. They are rough sketches of how these border-crossings were experienced, of how they were signified and performed. Hanging out on park benches, playing dominos in candle-lit (for lack of electricity) apartments, taking walks, jumping school fences to play football after hours, gathering around a communal bowl of *granat* soup and *fufu*,³ we talked and, each for our own reasons, tried together to make sense of the emerging meanings of the ‘adventure’ of migration, of the city, of what and where home is. We tried to trace who we are: who we are to each other and who we all become through our journeys and through our individual and collective border-crossings.

It has been argued that ‘approaching the border through narratives means allowing for its historicity and relationality’ to unfold (Doevenspeck 2011: 129). Narrativisation is an important medium, which helps people to create order in their worlds, as well as to sustain and construct both personal and collective identities. These identities are continuously narrativised and performed through the available social and cultural discourses. By listening to people’s narratives it is possible to gain an understanding of the meaning of borders in their lives and identities, to clarify such meanings and collect finely nuanced experiences and practices around them.

Migrant border narratives are personal accounts of journeys, centering on the migrants’ encountering, traversing and inhabiting borders and

borderlands of different kinds, while reflecting on their past, present and projected future. Employing border narratives is important in tracing current reconfigurations of physical and mental limits. Such accounts can challenge social power relations structures that intensify the hierarchisation of 'dominant' and 'subordinate' narratives of political—and other—borders. They can also reveal (re)definitions of identity, shifting groupings and out-groupings along the journey and the discursive—and sometimes even geographic—reinscriptions of boundaries in practice.

From Mobile Field . . .

Migrants' increasingly complex patterns of spatial mobility—at the urban, as well as at a global scale—call into question static and neat conceptualisations of the research field as a clearly demarcated area that a researcher can enter into and exit from unproblematically. The mobile border-crossing subjects pose challenges not just to our generally kinetophobic and claustro-manic societies (Papastergiadis 2010, Ruming 2009), but to research and its methodology as well. The research field—anchored on the migrating bodies—becomes mobile in itself as migrants navigate urban, national and international space. Therefore, it became obvious to me that it is imperative for ethnographies of migration to develop methods that can trace paths of circulation and travel more efficiently, while also incorporating the mobility patterns of various actors between multiple research sites rather than assume the fixity and rootedness of its subjects.

What became evident early on was the urgency of coming up with a method that would combine the hypermobile lifestyles of irregular migrants with that of the researcher, while allowing us to keep in systematic touch despite the distance as well as the ambiguity and unpredictability of our schedules. What I was grappling with was close to what Clifford (1997: 2) describes as: '[the ethnographer's] field-site opens onto complex histories of dwelling and travelling . . . Fieldwork is less a matter of localized dwelling and more a series of travel encounters. Everyone's on the move, and has been for centuries: dwelling-in-travel'.

. . . To Mobile Methods

Mobile methods (Büscher and Urry 2009, Fincham *et al.* 2010) 'are very useful in recognizing migrant subjectivities as always on the move, always changing, and always shifting within, among, and between various locations and spaces' (Keller 2004: 207). Such methods facilitate the empirical tracing

of migrant experiences across a geographically dispersed field, fragments of which are embedded in migrating bodies and set in motion with them.

Research methods that are ‘on the move’ open up possibilities to explore the fleeting, scattered and overlapping realities of migrants’ lives, while capturing their affective and kinaesthetic experiences in a context of mobility. As such, they make it possible to collect and weave together thick descriptions of the migrants’ condition of irregularity and their experiences of material and immaterial border-crossings at a series of nested scales converging at the level of the urban, which is this paper’s level of analysis.

Mobile methodologies can also help to ‘unsituate’ the subject in migration so that a better understanding and recognition of subjectivities can emerge as being in flux, on the move and shifting within, among and between various locations and spaces. The combination of such methodologies in the context of multisited ethnographic research brings forth the emerging genre of mobile ethnography (Cresswell 2011).

The Phenomenology of Borders

In an effort to bridge the distance between ‘a phenomenology of borders’ (Hanson 2009) and ‘the critical phenomenology of migrant “illegality”’ (Willen 2007a), I draw on the insight of Desjarlais, who notes that ‘Anthropology is in dire need of theoretical frames that link the phenomenal and the political . . . especially [studies] that convincingly link modalities of sensation, perception and subjectivity to pervasive political arrangements’ (1997: 25). This paper constitutes a preliminary attempt to articulate a ‘critical phenomenology of irregular border crossings’ at the level of the urban as ‘a phenomenologically inclined account . . . which attends at once to the concerns and lifeworlds of [ethnographic subjects] and to the interrelated social, discursive, and political forces that underpinned those concerns and lifeworlds’ (Desjarlais 2005: 369).

Migration Journals

One such method is the use of the ‘migration journal’, from where the introductory excerpt is taken. The idea of such a journal came up during a casual discussion within a group of research participants on how we could keep in touch during the times I would be away from Athens while, at the same time, they were making preparations to travel further into Europe. These journals were an attempt to keep the conversation going and create intimate, even though geographically and temporally dispersed, spaces of

sharing and meaning-making while, *en passant*, preserving their life-stories as a part of our collective history.

‘What’s In A Name?’: That Which We Call ‘An Illegal’⁴

My research participants, mostly men in their twenties, were migrants from various African countries who had entered Greece in an unauthorised manner. In English a number of words are used interchangeably to denote irregular migrants: illegal, clandestine, deportable, unreported (De Genova 2002, Willen 2007b), each one fraught with definitional, ideological and political implications. In Greek discourse, these people are being referred to as *‘paranomi metanastes’* (illegal migrants) and *‘lathrometanastes’* (contraband or stowaway migrants) or simply *‘lathro’*. The first term, which, compared to the others, is the most politically correct—although only occasionally used—flatly excludes them from the ethnocentric attribution of ‘the right to have rights’ within the political, judicial, social and territorial dimensions of the nation state. The succeeding term *‘lathrometanastes’* denaturalises migrants’ humanity by drawing analogies between human beings and unlicensed, imported commodities. Systematically depicted as ‘villains’,⁵ migrant personhoods are therefore reduced to smuggled objects that evade the regular process of being imported, streamlined, quality-checked, sorted out, stamped and stowed or discarded under the market-driven logic of state control. *‘Lathro’*—its next-of-kin term—further exemplifies the argument: by keeping only the adjective in singular neutral form and dropping the noun *‘metanastis’* (migrant) it rejects migrant subjectivities altogether, locking the absent attribute in perpetual abjection and depoliticisation.

The term I advocate, in both my academic and my personal engagement with this topic, the use of which is delimited by the social, historical and spatial scope of my research, is ‘irregular migrants’. By ‘irregular’ I refer both to African migrants in the Greek context who are indeed undocumented, and to those in possession of valid legal documents. This is because darker-and, even more so, black-skinned migrants in Greece, are commonly grouped together by the authorities, the media and public discourse based on their readily observable phenotypic Otherness, regardless of their ethnic or national origins, or their actual legal status. Bound together by their ‘non-belongingness’ to the Greek body politic, migrants are generally regarded as an irregularity in and of themselves and are consequently subjected to indiscriminate discrimination by citizens and authorities alike. Echoing the concern of Willen (2007a), I find it necessary to problematise the transferability of

terms used to describe presumably similar life conditions in different contexts, such as that of migrant ‘illegality’. The role of ethnography in this endeavour is crucial: ‘It is important to note that lack of legal status does not necessarily generate forms of social suffering. . . . Indeed, in some migration settings and some historical moments, lack of legal status may have relatively small impact on migrants’ everyday lives. . . . It is precisely this variation that highlights the need for greater comparative investigation of how the abject condition of illegality shapes migrants’ subjective lived experience in diverse migration settings, or, put differently, for ethnographic research into migrant illegality as the catalyst for particular forms of “abjectivity” ’ (Willen 2007a: 10–11).

Itinerant Paths of African Migration

Despite the long-standing, though numerically moderate, presence of African migrants in Greece, little attention has been given to them in social research. Conflict-torn countries such as Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan used to be the main countries of origin. In recent years, however, there has been a notable increase in the numbers of West African arrivals. The demographics of the group remain quite obscure. According to the data summarised by Papadopoulos and Fratsea (2013: 7): ‘In 2001, 7,000 people were migrants from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). By 2010, 3.4% of valid residence permits were in the possession of Africans. Nearly 5,000 people from SSA (1% of total migrants) had valid residence permits, over half of them being men and one tenth under 18 years of age. The majority of both men and women were in the 26-to-45 age group. Moreover, more than three quarters of this population is concentrated in the city of Athens’. A large number among them originates from former French colonies (Ivory Coast, Senegal, Guinea-Conakry, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali etc.). Their itineraries are found, nowadays, far from the traditional migration routes towards the lands of their former colonisers that vaguely remain as final destinations. This is illustrated in the recounting of the geographical detour in Michel’s journey through Egypt, Syria and Turkey to Greece.

The larger socio-economic transformations in Africa have resulted in increased flows of migration to Europe in recent years. In response, the implementation of concerted Frontex operations effectively sealed off many of the long-established entry points along the Spanish and Italian land and maritime borders (Reid-Henry 2013). In addition, bilateral agreements regarding readmissions and the further securitisation of borders were signed

between Spain, Italy and several African countries (Baldwin-Edwards 2006). Paired with the externalisation and ‘offshoring’ of EU borders inside African territory (Bialasiewicz 2012), the aforementioned factors caused a sudden change of direction in sub-Saharan migratory flows further to the East. Greece, which was traditionally a country of emigration, suddenly turned into a *de facto* immigrant destination, as well as a stop-over and transit ‘highway’ for irregular migration and refugee flows heading further north-west into the European Union.

In the aftermath of the recent regional geopolitical developments in Africa and the Middle East, Greece is currently one of the main entry ‘gates’ to Europe, upon whose borders diametrically different worldviews and necessities collide. Sub-Saharan Africans emerge as the archetypal postcolonial subjects from a geopolitical territory where the colonial nation-state project remained largely inchoate up to the recent wake of postnational cultural and political formations (Balibar and Williams 2002). Traditional precolonial and prenatal conceptualisations prevalent in Africa perceive space as mobile, borders as flexible, boundaries as resources instead of impediments, and circulation as the most appropriate method of managing the uncertainty of life (Breusers 1998, Mechlinski 2010). In the same manner, routes are viewed as not necessarily fixed, straightforward and rational, but rather as discontinuous, indeterminate and serendipitous. African loyalties, identities and belongings are fragmented and coincidentally re-articulated in constellations in which national identification plays only a part.

Greece’s geographical position and the unmanageability of its long and intricate borders, paired with regional geopolitical shifts and the long-standing failure of successive governments to formulate and implement coherent migration policies, led to a steep increase in the scale and diversity of incoming migrant flows. This was followed by a dramatic increase of the death toll instigated by precarious border-crossings (Strik 2012). These border-crossings have become hot debates as they are intertwined with issues of culture, identity formation and citizenship, the EU and Greek state policies on security and sovereignty, and social constructions of Otherness and of nationhood.

However, it is worth noting that, despite the portrayal of migrants’ arrival as an ‘imminent invasion’ by the media and the authorities (de Haas 2008), most African migratory flows are contained within the African continent and remain restricted to internal and regional migrations. Regional circulation has traditionally been viewed as the most appropriate method to manage the uncertainties of life. In much of sub-Saharan and Sahelian Africa, production and livelihoods derive primarily from the activity of circulation,

which affects goods, people and the locations themselves (Malam Moussa 2005, Walther 2009). The externalisation of EU borders, however, has increased the difficulty of releasing the traditional ‘socio-economic pressure valve’ through internal migration. Facing ever-increasing difficulties in migrating over short or medium distances so as to alleviate precarious life conditions, would-be migrants may feel compelled to embark on intercontinental journeys, which bear a significant additional allure despite the dangers they pose.

Cultural differences regarding perceptions of migration are illustrated by the way in which migrants from the former French colonies systematically refer to this process as ‘adventure’ (*aventure*) and to themselves as travellers (*voyageurs*) or adventurers (*aventuriers*), while seasoned migrants who have succeeded in their journey are informally called ‘*guerriers*’ (warriors) who have become hardened and unafraid from ‘travelling border to border’, as opposed to ‘wimpy regular migrants’ who just took an aeroplane to a Western European capital. The term ‘*aventurier*’ has recently started coming up in francophone research (Pian 2005, Vidal 2011). The conceptualisation of the adventurer departs from understandings of the migrant as a heterodirected individual who is caught between and subjected to ‘push and pull’ dynamics. Instead, this notion opens up actor-initiated angles at perceiving migration, stretching our vocabulary and mental frames on sub-Saharan dispositions towards human mobility.

The Minefield of Erupted Borders

Greek national sovereignty, under the impetus set in motion by the financial crisis, seems to be ‘hollowing out’ through the exodus of core state authorities from the national regulation and their transfer either to supranational institutions (EU, ECB, IMF, Frontex), or private corporations (large-scale privatisations, outsourcing of detention centres). Although appearing antithetical at first glance, these overwhelming pressures act, in fact, synergetically. With the added strain of cross-border mobility, a process resembling a vacuum implosion of the nation-state nucleus has been triggered. The external national borders have subsided, fractured and dispersed themselves across the internal territory of Greece, creating a scattered minefield of physical, social and symbolic barriers upon whose lines different authorities interlock, and which can be encountered down to the smallest micro-social scale.

Modern national sovereignty appears to be increasingly becoming an act of negation (the creation of groupings of ‘us’ against ‘them’ and the

ensuing assignment of rights and responsibilities to each). The erosion of sovereignty paired with the disintegration of social cohesion in Greece has set forth several non-democratically accountable forces. These ‘vigilante’ groups—the most prominent among which are the street-squads of Golden Dawn—coalesce and attempt to impose or reinforce ethno-national symbolic boundaries, in an effort to carve out exclusionary ‘*lebensraum*’ [*sic*] for them and those ‘like them’ against the threat of ‘Others’. Such behaviours are widespread and legitimised in public discourse. As indicated in Michel’s narrative, but also as testified by literally every participant in my research, migrants encounter such behaviours daily. The reactions of a large part of Greek society towards migrants cover the entire spectrum, ranging from mockery, suspicion and discrimination, to open hostility such as racial slurs and physical attacks.

Greece is currently suspended at the crucial moment of becoming a normalised ‘state of exception’ in itself: ‘the moment where the borders are erected within the national territory; tearing up any apparent society of equals’, becoming the signifiers of modern national sovereignty, as Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2007: 232) aptly put it, and where ‘the originary relation of law to life is not application but abandonment’ (Agamben 1998: 29). This condition of arbitrary de-bordering and re-bordering of material and immaterial boundaries is in itself a cause and effect of the newly emerging patterns of migrant im/mobility and of the ways in which these intersect with the rapidly shifting positions of other social groups within and beyond state, race, class and gender boundaries in Athens.

Reminiscent of another city in the South—Mexico City—the reinforced Greek borders turn inwards and cut open their capital. In the words of Erfani (1998: 143–144), ‘It is not that the U.S.-Mexico border . . . has been relocated to the capital, but, instead, that yet another borderland has sprung right up in the heart of the country’. Athens becomes a borderland within a border *land* since Greece, under the impulse of the financial crisis, seems to have become unshackled from the Eurocentric North and now drifts on a flailing southbound trajectory. The city is staked by a multitude of visible and invisible limits. These political, mental and symbolic boundaries are set in place by the series of dialectical supra- and sub-national processes which are currently at play in the region. The question: ‘Does Europe have a South?’ (Dainotto 2011) sounds disquietingly familiar. Along these lines, the European South, and within it Greece, seems to become ‘intimately tied to a global south and inseparable from it: they are both the “state of exception” defining by antithesis the spirit and identity of Europe’ (Dainotto 2011: 37).

Constructing ‘The Other’

Until recently, policies regarding migration in Greece only revolved around the containment of ‘illegal’ migration and border controls, aiming at the preservation of the monoethnic and monocultural character of Greek society (Triandafyllidou 2005). Existing laws were inconsistently implemented due to the idiosyncratic discordances within and between the various political agendas in Greece and the fragmentary attitudes of public opinion on these issues. In addition, the discourse on immigrant integration was systematically obfuscated with that on ‘illegal’ migration, further disorienting public opinion.

Triandafyllidou and Veikou (2002) argue that ‘a hierarchy of Greekness’ is constructed in Greek political discourse as different immigrant groups are organised in concentric circles around the ethno-genealogical concept which lies at the core of Greek national identity. This hierarchy creates multiple levels of inclusion and exclusion between migrant groups, based on qualities such as ethnicity and religion. Certain groups of Greek ethnic origin, such as Former Soviet Union Pontians and Greek-Albanians, are favoured by state policies. Besevegis and Pavlopoulos (2008) argue that the ‘cultural distance’ assumption is validated in the case of Greece, since migrants of Greek ethnic origin are followed by those from European countries and the Balkans, with individuals of Arabic, Asian and sub-Saharan origin occupying the lower tiers of this hierarchy.

‘Plastic citizenship’, which creates ‘plastic subjectivities’ (from the notion of plasticity) are two terms coined by Konsta and Lazaridis (2010: 368) to denote the development of pliant civic identities in Greece where ‘boundaries are blurred and processes of becoming, or not, are fluid, changing over time and influenced by notions of who should belong and who should not, who is entitled to what rights and who is not’.

Claims of social inclusion in Greece are guided by such assumptions of a ‘hierarchy of Greekness’ and the ensuing ‘plastic subjectivities’, which are becoming ever more exclusionary. The recent financial crisis seems to reinforce these hierarchies and to solidify the formerly semi-pliable civic identities, while xenophobic media representations lead to the exacerbation of negative attitudes towards migrants.

‘Others’, who may be defined in terms of a number of criteria (race, ethnicity, religion etc.), are constructed in opposition to the ‘we’ of the Greek imagined community and are systematically marginalised and to be eventually expelled from the Greek body-politic. As Bauman mentions, ‘All societies produce strangers, but each kind of society produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way’ (1997: 17). In the past, the threatening ‘Other’ was personified primarily as ‘the Albanian’.

During the last decade, however, migrants from South-East Asia, Afghanistan and Africa took their place as Albanian migrants integrated to almost complete indistinguishability within Greek society.

In this context, sub-Saharan Africans are not only perceived as extraneous to material aspects of urban space—in which they should remain invisible—but also as falling outside institutional regulations, symbolic codes and social practices, which serve to put people ‘in their place’ in social and spatial contexts. Those who embody the triptych ‘black-Muslim-man’, as most of my respondents did, are therefore personified as the ‘extraordinary exceptions’. They are the absolute Others who should remain hidden, out of the public realm and be restricted to private spaces.

However, Africans in Athens find themselves placed—unlikely and unluckily—at the very heart of a heavily securitised metropolis and at the epicentre of political discourse. Michel has to dwell in dilapidated and abandoned buildings, now found abundantly in the centre of Athens. In a peculiar interplay between social visibility and invisibility, the daily routines of irregular migrants such as work, praying, personal hygiene and eating, which are primarily performed in private, are now transferred to the public realm. Michel makes his living dragging his cart along central avenues looking for recyclable materials. He searches for water in public spaces and joins food lines in public squares. Interiority is thus brought into exterior spaces. Privacy is performed publicly, yet ‘invisibly’, by people like Michel who undeniably stand out in this context.

In the political and socio-economic turmoil that Greece is currently in, and despite the ever-closer intertwining of Greece with Europe, we observe the paradoxical phenomenon of Greece falling ever-outside the mental borders of Europe. As ‘the cradle of European identity’ is being ejected to its utmost periphery, and as Greeks are being perceived around Europe as ‘less than Europeans’, they find themselves at the very epicentre of discourses about the essence and future of Europe and, indeed, the world—quite like the migrants and the vehement rhetoric around them. As Greeks become the European ‘Others’, this pressure is alleviated internally with the invention of ‘domestic Others’—the ‘Others of the Others’.

In Athens, migrants negotiate their social visibility among an array of other actors in urban space: the police, Greeks living around or below the poverty line, their well-off employers, and other groups of immigrants and urban subalterns with whom they form makeshift alliances under the effects of the financial crisis.

It is within this context that ‘irregular’ migrants in Greece find themselves sharing their spaces of social and spatial exclusion in ever-closer proximity

to ‘regular’ citizens. The ‘regular irregulars’ of Athens (migrants, junkies, prostitutes, the homeless, Roma people) today live side-by-side with the ‘irregular regulars’ (the downwardly mobile native Greeks who are the social and economic casualties of the crisis), joined in their ‘irregular irregularity’ inside the urban underbelly.

Athens as a City of ‘Others’ and the Beehive of Kypseli

In an increasingly urbanised and globalised world, the urban context plays a crucial role. Cities have great importance in the organisation of migration, all the more so in the present context of global crisis, as societies undergo rapid economic, social, political and cultural change (Kaika 2012, Mantanika and Kouki 2011). Through their spatial and material qualities, cities become the terrain of concentration, as well as of contestation, of ever-increasing tensions occurring at national and international level, one among which is the heated topic of transit and/or settlement of large numbers of migrants within them.

The presence of the ‘stranger’, the ‘Other’ and his positioning along a series of binaries—inside/outside, close/far, mobility/immobility and, most importantly, the division between public/private in public space—is central to urban theory. In a social environment such as the Greek, which bears deeply the imprints of a mandate of conformity and compliance to an elusive yet imperative ‘regularity’, it is surmised that the material manifestation of society—the urban space it inhabits—should also be characterised by such ideologies engraved on its surface. In Athens, indeed, these core binaries of urbanity are called into question and get further exacerbated in the current climate of increasing socio-economic polarisation and endemic racism, directed against virtually all non-Greeks (Iosifides and King 1998).

The Athenian centre, as it was traced out through the narratives of migrants during my fieldwork, currently comprises an intricate and fragmented socio-cultural environment, characterised by elusive, yet clear-cut, fissures and urban border zones amidst a landscape of rapidly escalating racism and ‘xenophobophilia’ (Stolcke 1995) in crisis-ridden Greece.

Even though the particularities of urban development in Athens have significantly diluted the spatial effects of social stratification and the closely interrelated socio-economic segregation to be found in other Western cities, the image of a ‘dual city’ starts to emerge: ‘On the one hand [there are] “native spaces”, with little or no immigrant presence; and on the other hand, “different” or “mixed” spaces with a strong immigrant imprint. These

[have transformed] into “alien” spaces according to the immigrants’ needs and socio-spatial concentration/exclusion, and the clear rejection of these areas by the indigenous population’ (Iosifides and King 1998: 226).

Invisible urban borders—and the areas they would otherwise denote as safe/dangerous—are constantly moving, leaving migrants with syncopated, porous, penetrable and deeply vulnerable spaces between which they have to remain constantly mobile, inventing new ways of viewing, perceiving and using the city. Unable, and often unwilling, to entirely withdraw from public view and space, irregular migrants settle in ceaseless mobility while being caught in debilitating immobility, as they end up not merely crossing or inhabiting borderlands, but embodying their inescapable skin-thick version, ‘being the border themselves’ (Flynn 1997).

Crisis as a Catalyst

The effects of the subprime credit market collapse that reached Europe in 2009 and transmuted into what is by now the most severe recession since World War II culminated in a catastrophic convergence in Greece: ‘a multifaceted crisis that spreads like cancer across all segments of society . . . a financial, moral, social, cultural, civic and political emergency that seemingly calls for a rapid recoil of the most basic social and community acquis, in order for solely the financial acquis to be maintained . . . a collision of a series of political, social and economic disasters that compound and amplify each other, one expressing itself through feeding the other’ (Tsoni 2012).

The crisis has caused a profound downward restructuring of the living standards and everyday reality of the country’s population, accelerating the socio-economic marginalisation of dispossessed social groups, the majority of which reside within or around major urban centres. New consolidations of ‘Otherness’ are formed among their ranks as they no longer consist only of the familiar categories of urban subalterns, such as drug addicts, alcoholics, the homeless, Roma and irregular migrants. Nowadays, former members of middle classes who recently dropped ranks—Greece’s ‘*nouveau poor*’ (Kaika 2012)—find themselves in new constellations of ‘irregular Otherness’, jostling with the ‘regular irregulars’ of the city.

One can see them side by side in the streets of Athens, begging or rummaging through garbage for food. Yet, Athens’ *nouveau poor* can be distinguished easily from Athens’ veteran poor. They still wear decent clothes, and their body language is erect and dignified; they are convinced they do

not deserve what they got; they have not reached—yet—the level of misery that turns human beings into wretched creatures...; they have not—yet—entered the terrain where their existence is defined only by their position as beggars in a troubled peripheral European economy (Kaika 2012: 424).

Despite the fact that criminalising and penalising policies are gaining importance and policy makers are using and abusing discourses of fear and crime against all ‘socially atypical’ groups, and migrants in particular, these multilayered subaltern communities gradually peacefully take over the vacant niches of public space for lack of other options. Migrants, homeless Greeks, Roma—those forming the human ‘matter out of place’—claim space and make place, often together, in its heart. Their ubiquitous, resilient presence makes it impossible to dismiss their existence or to ignore them socially and politically. Their persistent visibility is a constant reminder of the need to reformulate understandings of the condition of urban marginality and inequality. In this way the ‘general public’ is forcibly called to re-evaluate the analytical categories within which ‘Others’ and their rights are understood and protected (or not) and how relevant to each other their lives are in the potentiality of ‘abjection’.

However, these inhabitants of marginal spaces are not merely on the receiving end of structural relations, doomed to a lack of agency and acute voicelessness. Trying their best to adapt and survive, they often transcend previously established social boundaries between them. They form new groupings, new modes of individual or collective life-making strategies and new occupational niches (Alexandrakis 2013). Often, uncommon solidarities and networks of support are formed, offering glimpses of alternative imaginaries in response to the economic downturn. Unable and often unwilling to withdraw from public view, all those living in ‘irregular irregularity’ reassert, collectively and individually, their ‘right to the city’ (Harvey 2003), reclaiming space for themselves, against the odds, and therefore reshaping Athens into ‘a city of Others’ (Vaiou and Kalandides 2009).

Invisible Borders: Manœuvring the City

Supplementary to the story of Michel, excerpts from my fieldnotes from the early stages of my fieldwork are now offered. They illustrate the various ways in which the social and geographical im/mobility patterns and daily experiences of both migrants and ‘natives’ are entangled. The seemingly different life trajectories they follow in crisis-ridden Greece appear unexpectedly similar upon closer inspection, revealing the unfolding of new patterns of in/equality.

When first setting out for what would eventually become this research I was merely looking for a way to pass my days of debilitating postgraduate unemployment in Greece. Buying myself some time before decisions on my future would inevitably have to be made, and with only a vague idea of what I wanted to research, I got up one day in January 2012, went to Kypseli in downtown Athens and ended up spending the best part of the following year there. Walking around and striking up conversations with random people at first, I then started bumping into them every other day as the geography of the run-down neighbourhood grew disquietingly familiar. We would sit in parks and playgrounds, or huddle outside cafés broadcasting football games on wide screens purposefully tilted outwards. We would give up around half-time however. Winter evenings descend with dry sharp cold spells in Athens; we needed to keep our limbs warm and so we wandered and talked in the meandering streets for hours. Sometimes we would walk into one small ethnic shop or another where the air sat heavy and still, loaded with the chatter of satellite TV and heated discussions in dialects. I stood and watched as people watched me—intrigued by my presence as much as I was by theirs.

Month after month, the recession deepened and prospects of employment diminished both for the migrants I hung out with and for myself. Some of them talked about going back, others planned to move on. Some disappeared from one day to the next—‘He travelled’ was the succinct answer to my questions. I had nowhere to go. And so, each evening, those of us left behind kept walking in circles around Amerikis Square.

On a sweltering summer afternoon I was walking along Patisision Avenue in downtown Athens with Oumar and Nesta [not their real names], two Guinean guys I had been hanging out with regularly. Blinded by the bright sunlight falling right into our faces as we walked on the northern sidewalk, I put my foot on the asphalt without warning, getting ready to cross to the other, shady, side. I took a step and... ‘NO!!’—Oumar grabbed my sleeve and pulled me back—‘No, don’t go *that* way!’, he said. I looked at them, puzzled, and Nesta asked: ‘Have you ever seen us walking on *that* sidewalk?’. ‘Ummm... Not really’. ‘That’s right. We don’t go walking down that side of the street’. ‘Huh? What’s the deal?’. ‘*This, there*—Nesta waved his palm vigorously, indicating the double line separating the traffic directions in the middle of the avenue—this cuts the street in two’. ‘*This* sidewalk’, he continued, pointing with a stiff index finger, ‘belongs to the police station of Kypseli. *That one*, over there, belongs to the department of Michail Voda. You understand now?’.

And suddenly, I did. Right there and then, all the strands of all the unravelled stories I had been holding onto for months, and which were slipping through my fingers, weaved themselves into a coherent pattern, with echoes of dark times of Greece's past. During the period of dictatorship in Greece, Patisson Avenue was similarly demarcated, albeit for different reasons. Further down towards the city centre, the crucial spatial delimitation marked along the course of the road was again between two police stations' jurisdiction – those of Exarchia and Omonia—and the crucial referent was the political ideologies of apprehended citizens. Nowadays immigrants get 'colour-picked' and are stopped for paper checks by the police daily in central Athens—sometimes the same person could be checked several times per day. If stopped on *the correct* sidewalk—ours—they would just go through the usual routine—well-known and much rehearsed by both sides. They would lose ten to twenty minutes, or be held at the spot until a sufficient number of immigrants was collected and then they would all be walked in choreographed formation down to the Kypseli police department a few blocks away. There, they would spend some hours or stay until the night, when they would be released to return to their homes close by.

If, however, they were stopped on *the wrong* sidewalk—the opposite one—they risked confrontation with some of the most hard-line officers in town. It would not be just a few hours' delay, nor a 'minor' inconvenience to their daily schedule, that would occur. Rather, it was inhumane treatment, ranging from verbal abuse and damage to their physical health (relentless beatings inside that police station were a common occurrence) to detention and deportation. Immigrants (documented or not) apprehended within the jurisdiction of this particular police station were loaded onto police buses and sent to the Central Alien's Department each night after midnight. There, they were the most often just ordered to get off the bus outside the premises and walk the 10 km back to the city centre on foot—often without even a check on their documents. On a bad day, they would have their profiles or fingertips run on the central database, which could potentially put their lives on an entirely different trajectory. At the same time, the police station at Michail Voda Street also happened to be the Frontex local reference department, notwithstanding being an infiltrated stronghold of Golden Dawn.

Caught in limbo in time and space, we—the migrants and I—were in a country that was falling apart; with nothing useful to do, scraping for coins at the bottom of our pockets; wishing to leave but having nowhere to go; held back by some hope, propelled forth by another. Finally grounded, I was left perching on the edge of that broken, dirty sidewalk, on a much more equal footing with my black immigrant friends than any of us would

dare or care to admit. And it was there that, for the first time, an additional, visceral dimension of the city that I thought I knew so well emerged: that of the irregular migrant of colour.

Hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees flow into Athens each month, only to disappear among the crowds with the '*fyge*'⁶ in their hands. African-origin migrants gather in Kypseli; in this polysynthetic enclave of peripheralised population at the very heart of Athens (and which in Greek interestingly enough means 'beehive') they get indefinitely caught in a vacuum between mobility and immobility, in limbo before an attempt to continue their onward journey. For them the Greek capital presents a 'concrete reality' (Ang 2006), manifesting on the ground the consequences of a cascade of (supra)national policies. Like any metropolis, Athens is also a grid of infrastructure and authority, a collection of armatures and enclaves,⁷ whose micro-territorialities irregular migrants have to learn to navigate. Their use of the infrastructure set in place to streamline and facilitate the daily flows of mobility of *bona fide* citizens and visitors is diametrically different. Their daily itineraries require a variety of manoeuvres to control their social visibility: their routes are rarely direct, and their paths are meandering to avoid police control or any type of unnecessary harassment. They live mostly off the grid, in houses without electricity or running water, landline phone or Internet. Their houses are temporary shelters, shells to be left behind, moorings on the surface of this landscape of horizontal (geographical) and vertical (social) mobility that does not offer any guarantee of directionality and only a vague sense of purpose.

Our times have been heralded as an era of a 'proliferation of borders' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013) which are permeated by variable dynamics of securitisation. These dynamics range from the 'massive global proliferation of deeply technophilic state surveillance' along territorial borders to the 'startling militarization of civil society' throughout the national territory (Graham 2010: xi). They reach down to the urban borderlands of our sprawling metropolises; and deeper down to the borders inscribed upon the 'geography closest in'—the body (Rich 1986) and its embodied, 'deeper-than-skin-deep' lines of distinction.

And then I remembered Abdulai, the 17-year-old boy from Sierra Leone whose genuine papers were torn apart and thrown in the garbage one night by three policemen, who said that they were fake. Abdulai remained undocumented from then on, but still went about the city in careful supermarket every night for his job—collecting garbage for recycling with his supermarket cart. Only rarely would he dare to roam further from his neighbourhood, and only if accompanied by friends. Once, when a large group of us had

gone to watch the migrant associations' yearly football competition, I suggested taking some of my friends from Kypseli out for a coffee in the suburbs where I lived. Most of them readily accepted. After much hesitation and great efforts to convince him, Abdulai, too, agreed to come with us. His strength could only carry him just a few steps past the ticket machines of the nearest metro station, however. When all of us walked in the direction of the line towards the suburbs, Abdulai froze in his tracks. He fixed his eyes on the strip of red marble on the grey floor, which divided the entrances of the two tunnels going in opposite directions. He started sweating and shaking with the signs of an anxiety attack. I was not forcing or holding him, yet he squirmed away from me and kept saying 'No, no, no, no Joanna. . . . No, no, no, no, *please* let me go back. Another time Joanna, I promise. I can't . . . I need . . . need to go back. I'm sorry! So so sorry!'. This boy had traversed the worst part of two continents by himself to get there, crossing some of the most heavily guarded and militarised borders stretching between his country and mine by any means available to him. Now this same boy was immobilised just three metres past the ticket machines by the prospect of going in the opposite direction to the one he was familiar with. What was he actually seeing right there and then, with his eyes wide open and fixed on the tiles on the floor? What was he reading behind the inconspicuous red lines which, in my eyes, were drawn to streamline and helpfully demarcate rather than prohibit passenger movement in any way?

When I started this research I had not set out to discover borders or boundaries, nor how people moved through and around them. Yet, I discovered that I had, all the while, been clumsily stepping in and out and all over them. Borders were in fact everywhere I went, and yet for me—and others like me—they were nowhere to be found. Daily movement and survival in interstitial migrant spaces required exhaustive exercising of capacities that the ordinary citizen has atrophied for lack of training. And so I had been tripping its wires and setting off alarms and detonators, staggering through erupting minefields of boundaries through which I went unscathed while others near me risked losing their very lives as they tiptoed around and sidestepped their lines across the city.

These survival skills, however, were acquired rather than inherent. They seemed to increase as people found themselves falling through the holes of social welfare. The 'nouveau poor' Greeks that Michel encounters in his daily life were needing to learn how to adapt in the urban margins, how to navigate the city, how to source food and available facilities. These are skills they often had to lift off migrants, or utilise services that were set in

place to cater for refugees and asylum seekers but which are now used equally by Greeks. Such are the social pharmacies, the free polyclinics of several NGOs, the weekly food distributions by migrant churches to their poorer members, among others.

Conclusion

The theoretical aim of this paper was to connect urban theory, critical mobilities (Jensen 2009), and critical border studies (Parker and Vaughan-Williams *et al.* 2009, 2012) with irregular migration in the metropolitan context of Athens in times of financial crisis. To this aim, a critical phenomenological perspective was adopted, which centred on the migrants' irregularity as a lived experience. Having as a starting point the story of one such immigrant, I attempted to portray a place-sensitive ethnographic account of migrant irregular border-crossings at the level of the urban. Instead of an introduction, Michel's story broadly sketches the backdrop along which we follow him through his geographical and social mobility and stasis, while attempting to juxtapose theoretical insights on his personal storyline as it unfolds in the socio-economic and spatial environment of Athens. This story was then supplemented by autoethnographic fieldnote excerpts that highlighted the commonality and difference of experience between 'regular' and 'irregular' urban dwellers, and the moments when their perceptions become concurrent. In this way we observe unforeseen 'constellations of mobility' (Cresswell 2010) and 'irregularity' emerge, while unlikely regroupings of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' people occur: tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of undocumented immigrants currently detained in Greece struggle for survival in urban marginality alongside Greece's 3 million people living at or below the poverty line.

Irregularity is therefore understood as the point of convergence of a series of 'deviations from the expected rules, regulations and the general norm' in the face of the neoliberal restructuring and state deregulation currently rampaging throughout Greece. Irregularity is approached as a lived experience and a mode of being-in-the-world mainly, but not exclusively, by undocumented migrants, as it lately starts to be shared as a life situation by other—regular—social groups, too.

On European soil, African immigrants personify the extraordinary exceptions. They are the exemplary Others that the new European legal system has constructed as falling outside the symbolic boundaries of race, religion, etc. Their very existence and circulation in the context of undocumented travelling towards and within EU-rope contests preconceived

Eurocentric notions regarding the impetus of their migration and challenges a series of boundaries set in place to keep them as extraneous.

Whilst xenophobia, racism and populism, as well as the (inter)national migration policy regime, attempt to reduce irregular migrants into contemporary immobile and invisible '*homines sacri*' (Agamben 1998), they should not be simplistically represented as located merely on the receiving end of structural relations, doomed to a lack of agency, an acute voicelessness. Irregular migrants are understood as agentic, socially and historically situated actors in the process of pursuing their larger life projects. Their interdependent mobilities (Büscher and Urry 2009) can produce and reform social life across great distance.

The very visibility and mobility of irregular sub-Saharan Africans in the heart of the metropolis boldly challenges established conceptualisations of citizenship, identity and belonging. Irregular migrant spaces are often assumed to be entirely cut off by those of the authorities, those of '*bona fide*' citizens, and those carved out by all the boundaries which are instrumentally used to keep 'outsiders' in their place, out of sight. This, however, in the case of African immigrants in Athens, seemed not to hold true. This does not mean that structural and power constraints were erased—quite the opposite—but there was, however, room for manoeuvre, space for negotiation and interplay between structures, the carriers of structures and individual agencies—even if slight and unpredictable. As they claim, appropriate and transform places, even if merely by the inevitability of their visibility in public space, they become 'strategic actors' (Ley 2005) who engage with a series of material and immaterial borders, negotiating the boundary-marking behaviour of the nation state and its overarching supranational institutions.

'We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us' is a phrase depicting the paradoxical context and *mestizaje* hybrid identities of Latino migration in the US (Burke and Santos 2000). I found similar echoes resounding in Southern Europe from the mouths of people whose collective and personal histories had been drawn and redrawn by the crossing of borders throughout generations.

Through their daily practices within the emergent urban crisis-scapes, migrants assert that, even in the most subjugated positions, some measure of resistance—and, under certain circumstances, also political action—is possible. Their lives, together with their everyday experiences and struggles, are commonly neglected in accounts of social and political transformation, since they are not identifiable elements of broader, unified social movements. They consist of imperceptible moments of social life, jettisoned in the heart

of our metropolises, living cheek-by-jowl with crisis-bred unfamiliar categories of urban ‘subalterns’. Together they pose bottom-up challenges—even if imperceptible—to the dominant imaginaries that the power-lines of national borders and their devolved socio-cultural boundaries are instrumentally used to affix. Their everyday practices, however, open up perspectives from which to view what is currently at stake. The patterns of im/mobility and in/equality unfolding around them call into question the prevalent political, cultural and economic structures, together with their lines of distinction, at a series of nested scales, helping to create new social imaginaries and realities through a reconceptualisation of urban theory and praxis in such critical times.

Notes

1. Note that Michel offers the translation of some of these terms himself. *Skoupidia* literally means ‘garbage’ and, among the migrants, is used as a job title. *Laiki* is the traditional weekly vegetable market in each city neighbourhood; the immigrant garbage scavengers set out their rescued items for sale around the edges of the market. *Karochi* is a supermarket trolley which the scavengers use to collect and transport the salvaged items.
2. *Yifto*: Gypsy (lit). Roma people are active in the garbage recycling business: they usually own pick-up trucks, which makes it is easy for them to drive around and collect recyclable materials like paper or metal from the immigrants who have no other option but to push their cart all the way to the remote areas where collection points are located.
3. *Granat* (groundnut) soup and *fufu* (a dough made of pounded yam, cassava or other starch) are staple West African foods.
4. Paraphrased quote from William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II. Scene II, ‘What’s in a name? That which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as sweet’.
5. Ingrid Sahlin (1994) refers to the dichotomy between representations of different migrant typologies—the ‘pitiabls’ (i.e. refugees) as opposed to the ‘villains’ (i.e. ‘illegal’ immigrants). Based on which discourse is foregrounded, different political courses of action come into force.
6. *Fyge* which, in Greek, literally means ‘Go!’ in the imperative form, is the aptly nicknamed ‘document of release’ that undocumented migrants are given by the police when released from the initial detention after turning themselves in or getting apprehended upon entering Greece. Like many of the words in the limited Greek vocabulary of irregular immigrants (which consists almost entirely of words deriving from their encounter with the authorities and, most commonly, the police), this term derives from the verbal order they are given upon the hand-over of the release document. With this document

migrants are granted a thirty-day residence permit after which they are required to leave the country 'voluntarily, in a direction of their choice' (Tsianos *et al.* 2009).

7. 'The main features of armatures are that they are linear systems for sorting sub-elements in the city and arranging them in sequence . . . armatures are channelling flows and linking nodes in complex networks of distribution. They work as sorting and sequencing devices . . . the armature is the backbone of the network and is scalable from the sidewalk to the global flight corridors. Opposite the armature we find the enclave, which functions as a bounded territory and is defined by its ability to add friction to mobility. The enclave is a bounded unit and comes in the form of an isolated district or enclosed site and territory. However, enclaves also differ in their relative openness towards their context. They are found from hermetically sealed off sites to permeable places criss-crossed by the flows of armatures . . . they may perform in various guises; as linear, stretched and compressed enclaves' (Jensen 2009: 140).

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II

‘THEY WON’T LET US COME, THEY WON’T LET US STAY, THEY WON’T LET US LEAVE’. LIMINALITY IN THE AEGEAN BORDERSCAPE: THE CASE OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS, VOLUNTEERS AND LOCALS ON LESVOS

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Abstract

This paper draws on ethnographic observations along the south-eastern Mediterranean informal migration route through the Aegean Sea. I focus on the Greek border island of Lesbos as the central stage where the European crisis of asylum has been recently unfolding. In the absence of coherent national and European asylum policies, newly arrived migrants, refugees, and receiving communities (comprised mainly of local residents and volunteers from mainland Greece and Europe) are left to cope with and against each other, leading to multiple personal and collective passages. In this interstitial transit space, subjectivities are made and remade through their participation and resistance to the ongoing production of EU borders. I suggest that liminality provides a useful lens through which to understand the perplexing ‘time-spaces’ and interactions between multiple actors involved in the teetering asylum system on the margins of Europe. I argue that, through various actors’ experiences on

Lesbos as a complex social site, liminality emerges as a form of sustained social marginality and exclusion that extends beyond Lesbos itself. The protracted and broadened crisis context in which asylum-seekers and receiving communities of locals and volunteers on Lesbos find themselves provides a salient example of the gradual socio-spatial and temporal ‘stretching’ of liminality from a transitional phase towards a condition of permanent and portable liminality experienced at both the individual and the collective level, and both at and away from borders.

Keywords: Lesbos, borderscape, asylum-seekers, liminality, rite of passage, volunteers

‘Ellos no dejan que lleguemos, no dejan que nos quedemos, no dejan que nos vayamos.’ Liminalidad en el paisaje fronterizo Egeo: el caso de los migrantes irregulares, voluntarios y gente local de Lesbos

Resumen

Este artículo se basa en observaciones etnográficas a lo largo de la ruta de migración informal del sudeste mediterráneo a través del mar Egeo. Me centro en la isla fronteriza griega de Lesbos como escenario central en el que la crisis europea de asilo se ha estado recientemente desarrollando. En ausencia de políticas coherentes nacionales y europeas de asilo, migrantes recién llegados, los refugiados y las comunidades receptoras (compuestas principalmente por los residentes locales y voluntarios de la Grecia continental y Europa) se quedan con el cargo de enfrentarse en conjunto y en contra de los demás, dando lugar a múltiples pasajes personales y colectivos. En este espacio intersticial de tránsito, subjetividades se hacen y rehacen a través de su participación y de la resistencia a la producción continua de las fronteras de la UE. Sugiero que liminalidad proporciona un lente útil para comprender los desconcertantes "espacio-tiempos" y las interacciones entre múltiples actores involucrados en el sistema de asilo que tambalea en los márgenes de Europa. Argumento que, a través de las experiencias de diferentes actores de Lesbos como un sitio social complejo, liminalidad surge como una forma de marginalidad social sostenido y exclusión que se extiende más allá de Lesbos en sí. El contexto de crisis prolongada y ampliada en el que se encuentran los solicitantes de asilo y las comunidades recipientes de residentes y voluntarios en Lesbos proporciona un ejemplo destacado del progresivo 'estiramiento' socio-espacial y temporal de liminalidad de una fase de transición hacia una condición de permanente y portátil liminalidad experimentado tanto en el nivel individual como colectivo, y tanto cerca como lejos de las fronteras.

Palabras clave: Lesbos, paisaje fronterizo, solicitantes de asilo, liminalidad, rito de paso, los voluntarios

Introduction

As the morning ferry from Piraeus approaches, Lesbos emerges receptive and tranquil from the crystalline Aegean waters. Through the thin mist the island hangs suspended on the edge of a narrow sea splintered by the gash of a border drawn some 90 years ago by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, separating Lesbos from

its geological roots on Anatolia (now Turkey). Since the early 2000s, the island has been transformed from an idyllic tourist destination into a leading gateway of informal migration into Europe. With a handful of other border islands (including Samos, Chios, Kos and Leros), Lesbos lies on the historically established yet recently hyperactivated 'arc of arrival' that stretches across the maritime border between Greece and Turkey. Since 2008 the number of informal arrivals has been steadily increasing, reaching an unprecedented peak during the summer months of 2015. This pattern continued unabated throughout the fall, and then decreased slightly during the first months of 2016. After the EU–Turkey Repatriation Agreement was signed on 8 March 2016, migration was brought to a sudden halt. However, as one migration epoch draws to an end another re-opens, as recent political developments divert migration flows once more to far more perilous crossings, from Libya towards the Italian shores.

Through the following research questions, I intend to problematize the concurrence or divergence of experiences and practises of various actors who inhabit – however temporarily – this border landscape. Is Lesbos an idyllic tourist destination, home to a vibrant, laid-back, hospitable community, as depicted in tourism advertisements? Is it an island of refuge for the persecuted? Is it yet another sovereign border? Is it a frontier of pioneering self-realization through philanthropic humanitarianism, as some volunteers suggest, or is it a site of ritualistic, streamlined irregular passage, as the migrants might lead us to believe? Or is this border at the edges of Europe a line looping itself into a noose-like, ever-diminishing, selectively permeable, carceral space of indefinite legal and socio-spatial liminality?

This article grew out of ethnographic fieldnotes, participant observation, and personal experience on Lesbos from 2012 to the present. During this time I was actively involved in local responses to refugees on the island in different capacities. Most recently, I spent December 2015 volunteering with the front line of boat rescue and reception with a lifeguard association stationed on the beach of Molyvos Lighthouse on the northern shore of Lesbos. Through these visits I created the following original data sources which I draw upon for this article: in-depth discussions and informal

interviews, personal narratives and testimonies, participant observation, recollections from research diaries paired with online ethnography, mobile methods and ethnographic film-making.

I use these data to create a composite sketch of the changing seasons of migration on the island. As part of my analytic approach in this article, I weave an evocative text that attempts to mirror the complex borderscape as I and others experience it. I purposefully employ autoethnographic description as a heuristic device in order to situate readers within specific sensory and affective landscapes, which feel almost unshakeable for all those who went through them. These are 'affective environments in which one cannot be at ease... [which] nevertheless stick with the observer, as much as they haunt those who live in them every day' (Stoetzer 2014).

This paper approaches the 2015 refugee exodus towards Europe as a ritual passage through Lesbos, and provides an ethnographic analysis of liminality as a protracted socio-spatial and temporal condition in a borderland locality emerging as a Foucauldian 'crisis heterotopia' (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986). First, I discuss the concept of liminality within the field of human geography with regard to mobility and migration studies. I then dive into the visceral aspects of island life during the last few months by providing a self-reflective look at the encounters and perspectives of different actors whose trajectories crossed and reached an impasse on Lesbos. As old identities come apart and social norms and rituals loosen and dissolve, new meanings and selfhoods arise in liminal spaces. Whatever life on the island once used to be, it has now been indefinitely suspended. This holds true not only for the irregular border-crossers but for the receiving communities as well – both locals and volunteers – as everyone is captured in the legal, socio-spatial and affective limbo of routinized liminality.

Liminality in human geography and migration studies

The concept of liminality used in this article derives from social anthropology and signifies the 'betwixt and between' state experienced by persons

undergoing a ritualistic identity transition. According to this model, transition occurs in three successive stages: separation, liminality, and aggregation. Space, community, temporality and mobility, concepts central to human geography, can be seen as embedded within rites of passage. They are integral to the liminal middle stage, too: it is from within an emplaced community that, upon the occurrence of a 'triggering event', the liminal subjects must depart, distance themselves for an extended duration of time, and eventually return to in order to reap the upgrade of their social status within their former community as a reward for their trials.

According to van Gennep's conceptualization of 'rites of passage' (1960), after the eruption of a 'triggering event' a person sheds one identity state and embarks on a transformation that follows three successive, linear stages. These stages have fixed durations and follow specific rules of conduct, taking place in particular sites usually hidden away from common sight. During the pre-liminal phase of separation/segregation, the subject detaches from his or her community and rejects previous symbols and codes. During the liminal stage, the subject enters an ambiguous phase of transition/suspension of identification. In this phase few, if any, of the attributes of the 'before and after' stages can be discerned and social rules are suspended, as subjects belong to neither the 'old' nor the 'new' subject position. The consummation of the passage comes during the third phase of reintegration/aggregation (post-liminal stage) where, after having successfully completed the trials of the middle stage, liminal subjects are now invested with a new identity and an elevated social position which allow them to re-enter society.

Victor Turner (1967), extending van Gennep's work, conceptualized the liminal subject as an 'inter-structural' being occupying a 'betwixt and between' position. During this time, persons undergoing this ceremonial transition are required to be socially and physically invisible, remaining subdued and ambiguous in a shapeless, malleable form that evades external definition. While in this phase, outcasts are considered unclean. They are psychically sullied and physically polluting to all those who have not been

immunized against them. They become explicitly tethered to possible death, ceremonially prescribed to them as structural and physical extinction. They are divested of all their rights. Stripped of possessions and personhood, they owe complete obedience to the elders and the ceremonial masters who have the sole power to decide their fate.

In Turner's conceptualization, dramaturgy and performance are at work in the ritual passage. Social dramas are viewed as 'units of aharmonic or disharmonic social processes, arising in conflict situations' (1979: 63) and they 'demand a stage, actors, a heightened atmosphere, spectators, the smell ...and roar of the crowd', calling forth the full spectrum of sensuality and affect (1979: 94). Dramas are sequenced into acts or 'moves'. Actors and audiences are moved between the different stages through dialogue and performance, and they get moved emotionally and mobilized physically so the transition may conclude. Turner adds the notion of 'ritual reversal' in the performance of a social drama, where 'turnabouts of normal social status' would occur (i.e. the rich would impersonate the poor and *vice versa*). He also lays out the idea of the frames enclosing such dramatized events within some types of border – physical or symbolic – usually by the social and political hierarchy of a given community. Those at the top of the hierarchies have the full capacity to script, punctuate and signify the content and the sequence of the ritual's episodes. Carved off from 'everyday' space, the incidents unfolding within those frames are offered up as a spectacle to non-participants. The social outcome of such performances is expected to relate to the unity and continuity of the nation, its identity and territory.

The concept of liminality as an analytical tool has much to offer refugee and migration studies. Indeed, 'legal liminality' (Menjívar 2006) has been explored as the superimposition of 'liminality as a spatial phenomenon' with 'liminality as a legal status'. In this sense, the production of spaces of liminality, such as borders and detention centers, corresponds to the production of irregular migrants as liminal legal subjects. Menjívar (2006: 1032) uses this concept of 'liminal legality' as a way to gain leverage into the 'mighty impact of law' on the everyday lives of immigrants both at

and beyond borders. Recently, however, through the intensification of the processes of criminalization of solidarity towards migrants and refugees, not only are newcomers faced with impeding liminal legality but anyone else showing support is too.

With a few notable exceptions, however, the concept is underutilized in human geography. It should gain traction, especially with regard to the examination of the refugee space passage and the emergent assemblages of actors located in differential and persistently ambiguous structural positions within the changing circumstances of the ongoing European crisis of asylum and its political project of borders. The relational examination of the interlocking experiences and voices of people coming together within the transitive refugee space-time of Lesbos reveals that these embodied, affective and visceral aspects of living along the very edges of everything that Europe and the European Union have come to symbolically stand for are conceptually exceeding a condition of mere socio-spatial marginality. The transitivity and ambiguity characterizing a liminal period affect not only persons undergoing it, but also the spaces within which the passage occurs. These qualities make liminality an essentially, although underutilized, spatial concept. In this study it became a conceptual device facilitating the examination of protracted socio-legal ambiguity and abstruseness experienced by everyone encompassed within the south-eastern European borderscape around Lesbos.

Passage as an impasse

The year 2015 will remain forever etched in the local as well as the international collective memory as the year of the 'great refugee exodus' towards Europe. Around 500,000 arrivals on Lesbos alone were recorded in 2015 out of a total of 860,000 registered arrivals throughout the Greek islands (UNHCR 2015, 2016). As a result, Lesbos became the indisputable 'gateway island' for irregular migrants entering Europe.

Refugee statistics provide a broad measurement of the magnitude of migration, but do not illuminate the significant social interactions that take place at the scale of the everyday. Migrants and refugees had been

landing for years on the northern and south-eastern coastlines of Lesbos, leading to the normalization of small groups of tired, bewildered people growing to larger columns and caravans. In the past, after landing they would hide their lifejackets and destroy their rubber dinghies so that they would be deemed to be castaways in case of interception, as they were instructed to do by the irregular travel facilitators on the Turkish side. They would then change into dry clothes and set out on foot from the disembarkation zone to the island's capital, Mytilene, to register their asylum claim. Only there could they obtain the coveted '*fýge*' – the police registration and release paper allowing them to buy a ticket and board the ferries to mainland Greece and continue towards Northern Europe.

Upon arrival, without official documents or guidance from any authority (as neither the police nor the coastguard had a clearly dictated legal responsibility towards them), migrants and refugees had to stumble along for several days, in a long single file by the narrow roadside of the island's winding rural highways. They carried their bags, dragged their exhausted children, their elderly and their sick up the steep hills and across the long sweeps of rugged, desert-like plains. Under the scorching sun or pouring rain they stumbled along: human refuse on a 'death march', banned from hiring a taxi or getting on public transport as they set out to cover the ground from the northern shores of Lesbos to Mytilene – a distance of up to 100 km from their arrival points. These human caravans had become a common sight on Lesbos.

The phrase '*They won't let us come, they won't let us stay, they won't let us go*' emerged as a cry of exasperation since the first surge in irregular arrivals on Lesbos in 2008. It arose from the collective experiences and narratives of refugees on the island who found themselves caught in an impossible situation. If they did not get illegally pushed back to Turkey while crossing, they were received with indifference or hostility by the local authorities and simultaneously prevented from leaving the island or Greece due to the legal and political restrictions imposed on their mobility. The phrase soon became a slogan shared by immigrants and anyone expressing solidarity with them. It was spray-painted on walls, shouted out during demonstrations,

and used as an argument in public debates on these issues.

The first moments after a boat landed safely ashore were 'affectively saturated' for everyone involved – hectic and emotional. A ritual passage through the fearsome wilderness and its unpredictable natural forces – the sea and the dark night – appeared completed. Little was known then of the shifting political and legal landscape awaiting refugees ahead. Save for the deep relief and renewed hope expressed by the newly arrived, it was a yearning for the next stage to begin that set the tone of all encounters: that of the eventual social re-entry and its tranquillity and peace; of having, eventually, transitioned. Similar to the makeshift pre- and post-departure ceremonies (such as divination prayers to bless their boat, pouring oil to calm the sea or holding holy books open over the waves to 'take demons out of the water'), small personal rituals of arrival happen immediately after the first steps on the 'other' side: receiving hot tea prepared 'the arab way' by volunteers, sharing food, taking pictures, asking for the direction of Mecca so prayers can be said, kissing the ground, playing musical instruments and singing. A rare video was recorded of such a ritualistic performance to celebrate the perceived conclusion of the irregular journey and the conclusion of the liminal period after the landing of a refugee boat somewhere on Lesbos in early 2016. Accentuating the 'subjunctivity of ritual' (Turner 1967), a young man bursts into a spontaneous mourning song, here below translated from the Arabic, describing the ritual passage of crossing the sea border, invoking its human, material, affective and phantasmatic aspects, and imploring the sea to now let them have peace and move forward (Aldeen 2016):

Oh sea, give us love

Look what has happened to us

Do not send your waves against us

We are Syrians, I swear to you,

Our story is sad

Oh you will not believe it, but our tears can
drown even you

This is how much we have cried

We have accepted all the people with
kindness and love

But when we fell down they all betrayed us

No-one mourned for us

Oh today the whole world has abandoned us

Oh sea, stop the waves

There were children in the boats who are our
memories

Our lives are in these boats

I swear to you, our tears could cover all the
seas of the world

Our children have lost their childhood upon
your waves

The boats carry the dreams of childhood that
seek a harbour

And your waves have killed our children

Oh sea, let your waves have mercy on us,

To care for us like a mother would

Oh for us Syrians fate is heavy

Let us only have peace, this is the only thing
that we want

And now, we will keep moving forward

So that we may find some kind of tranquillity
and peace.

At first the (is)land is hailed as a safe place in which to take refuge from the perilous, unforgiving sea but then the need to move forward spatially, temporally and affectively, exiting this ambiguous condition, is emphatically expressed. As the song breaks the dawn, the shores bridged by the nightly boat-crossing, together with the people scurrying around before the UNHCR bus to the registration camp leaves, the deflated grey plastic boat, the small hill of lifejackets, the Greek coastguard boat in the near distance, the lost childhood dreams, and the ruins of Syria all stand suspended in space and time: in between the old and the new, the East and the West, the past and the present, and uncertainty and hope.

Forward movement into the next 'act' of the passage as social drama will occur at different speeds from that point on. Newcomers, however, are inevitably marked by Lesvos already: by their irregular arrival on its shores, the people awaiting for them there, the documents they were furnished with, the official stamps, their fingerprints, their stories. All these are to be tied with the islands' name: to be memorized together with their arrival date – like a new birthday – as every immigrant I had ever discussed this with professed. Lesvos as an entry point into Europe marks the newcomers' experiences and feelings, introduces them to yet another liminal phase, fixing it on their now-'embordered' bodies.

The exponential increase of volunteers and humanitarian organizations arriving to offer help provides yet another account of this crossing's rapid intensification. Prior to the 2015 swell in arrivals, irregular border-crossers were only occasionally met by small local initiatives and a handful of supportive Lesvos citizens who tried to facilitate their landings and reception by offering clothes, food, general advice and an occasional ride in their private vehicles, risking arrest and human-smuggling charges in so doing. During the second phase of the so-called 'refugee crisis', between September and November 2015, up to 7,000 refugees arrived in Lesvos daily. Their first reception became a free-for-all feast, and the few pre-existing local voluntary organizations were trampled over by up to 100 national and international organizations, agencies and solidarity collectives, as well as thousands

of independent international volunteers soon rushing in. Along with them, throngs of journalists, photographers, activists, researchers, statutory personnel, entrepreneurs, profiteers, curious tourist-volunteers, scavengers and anyone-in-between turned up. All the while, any official political or administrative response from the Greek or the European authorities remained glaringly inefficient, if not entirely absent. The burden of rescue, reception and assistance fell, therefore, almost exclusively on the voluntary and statutory organizations' shoulders, despite the improvisational nature of their response. As volunteer involvement broadened and intensified, a 'volunteering culture' gradually emerged and climaxed both offline and on, assuming different patterns, symbolic hierarchies and identity markers according to 'job' specificities, the tasks at hand (search and rescue, shorewatch, clothes/food distribution, medical/legal assistance etc.), length of stay, and the myriad motivations and organizational cultures guiding each individual and NGO.

Volunteerism on the island is a paradigmatic example of liminal work as it takes place within sharply shifting circumstances, as people create and recreate loose networks within and between organizations, adapting to the conditions at hand. When the small window of opportunity of the 'Balkan route', which allowed migrants to easily travel to Northern Europe, was closed after the sealing of the Greek borders with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, both mainland Greece and the islands came under the tremendous pressure of unabated arrivals. Makeshift camps mushroomed all over the country. Since 20 March 2016, when the EU–Turkey Repatriation Agreement came into effect, the liminal loop in which people are caught gets ever smaller, harsher, and more acute. The support community created on Lesbos was almost entirely dismantled but for a few core structures at specific locations that persist.

The throngs of volunteers have either scattered around Greece following around the leftover migrants on Greek territory, or moved against the incoming current – beyond the Greek borders into Turkey or further away to Lebanon and Jordan. Others just returned home, where they often rehash memories from Lesbos online or by meeting up with other vol-

unteers. The majority of the volunteers on Lesbos had no prior relation or involvement (personal, educational or professional) with refugee issues and they would usually come at times signifying a critical juncture in their own lives – graduation, retiring and going on a pension, and personal crises such as divorce, leaving their jobs etc. Island memories, especially those revolving around certain high-profile activities such as the nightshifts of coastline boat reception, are hard to leave behind and therefore often retold. The persistent and detailed recollection of those incidents sometimes appears as a fixation overrun by feelings of 'being stuck' (*kollimenos*), as Papataxiarchis (2016) has also ethnographically observed. A characteristic example is offered in the following status update from a volunteer's Facebook page who bumped into another volunteer at a pro-refugee demonstration in Stockholm.

Met this guy at the refugee demonstration in Stockholm today, and I was instantly back in Lesbos. A cold, wet and windy night in October, taking in boats around midnight in the area west of Light House camp in Skala Sikamineas. Five boats landing simultaneously on a 1 km stretch. In the pitch black, where all the senses registered were the ice-cold rain, the wind distorting the sound of frightened refugees, and the rough seas with waves rumbling over the rocky shore. In his dark clothes walking out of the dark, surrounded by disoriented refugees and stressed out volunteers with headlamps, smiling, calm as ever. Together with dedicated volunteers we made sure all the refugees got dry, a bite to eat and a safe place to sleep that night. You never truly leave Lesbos (Kristoffer, 25, Swedish volunteer).

Volunteers 'roaming' the Greek countryside looking for new formal or informal refugee settlements and camps for the thousands of stranded refugees are portrayed by the media as questionable personalities with dubious motives. Representations of volunteers oscillate between narratives of unadulterated heroism by some and dangerous opportunism or obsession by others – and by the volunteers themselves – each one

making their own definition of who they are, what they do, and why:

Volunteer? I don't like this word because it suggests that something is for free, but nothing comes for free in this life. I prefer the word 'activist'. Many disagree, but I don't care. Activist. From the word 'act'. That means I'm taking action, I'm doing something, I'm not sitting idle. Who are we? Don't we have jobs? Homes? Families? Why do we leave our children and run in the fields? We are just simple people next door. Unemployed, badly paid clerks, people with diplomas who had to close their practices, students who sacrifice their little pocket money. But you know – during the nights of Moria, the nights of Eidomeni, we didn't exchange resumé's, we overcame our fears, we exchanged love in a way that most of us were never taught how to. I can't explain it all. It's something personal. We lost a lot but won just as much. Then it was difficult to go back to our previous life. We felt as if we were in the Matrix – in a parallel artificial reality. Nothing was the same ever again. Not even food tasted the same. The only real burning wish was this: When are we going to return to the field? Field rats. We do not need NGOs. We don't need yellow fluorescent vests. We are not afraid of being arrested or slandered by the media. There are no borders for us. There are no passports. Field rats. That's who we are (Simon, 36, Greek volunteer).

Any reference to the 'refugee crisis' currently faced by Greece is but another facet of the ongoing European crisis of its policies and institutions. These are expressed through the acute shortcomings of the EU asylum system, just as the localized aspects of the 'refugee crisis' are coupled with the financial crisis straining the country since 2008. The convulsions of compounded crises affected the lives of Greek people, especially those living in remote border areas whose seasonal sector economies face declining growth rates and are met with limited national institutional capacity to alleviate the negative effects of those processes on their most vulnerable populations. On

an island of 85,300 inhabitants, many of whom are descendants of Anatolian refugees forced to flee the now-Turkish coastal towns in 1922, a quarter of its population (23,000) had been registered in 2015 as beneficiaries of various municipal social aid programs, such as soup kitchens, social solidarity clinics and food banks (Maravas 2015). The persistent financial crisis has affected local islanders who, like the rest of the increasingly impoverished Greek people, are morally castigated for the country's economic failure (Herzfeld 2016), and transformed from 'regular', 'deserving' Europeans into 'irregular' and 'undeserving' Others (Tsoni 2013). Next to the copious mixed flows of 'regular irregulars' of the European constructions of belonging, tens of thousands of 'irregular irregulars' on Lesbos alone – Greece's 'new poor' – are forced to make ends meet as well as they can. However, hardly any of the organizations jostling at the refugee arrival spots or the registration camps on Lesbos ever took any notice of the refugees' real needs (Obordo 2016; TrueLesbos 2016), maintaining, instead, only the shortsighted scope of their often merely photo-opportunistic humanitarian actions.

Eva is a 45-year-old French-language teacher living in the town of Molyvos who is now unemployed and rents out a bedroom of her apartment to rotating volunteers. Her narrative is illustrative of how the entire local society – not just the poorest among them – are caught in the repercussions of the 'refugee crisis' and its aftermath of affective liminality:

Everyone comes here and has one thing in mind: helping the refugees. It's all about the refugee crisis. This is not bad, the whole world is nowadays concerned. But does anyone think about the local people? They were here when all this started, this is their reality for years now and it is only getting worse. The NGOs and the volunteers may come and go as they please. But we have nowhere to go and so we must stay here. What about our crisis? We are not activists. We live here, this is our life but now almost everything is ruined. Not only for the poorer people, but all the rest of us as well. The economy is going from bad to worse and this year tourism has plummeted too.

The tons of material leftovers changing hands – expendable for some while valuable for others – constitutes another metric system, where one person's treasure soon becomes trash which then becomes another's treasure (Tsoni 2016) with the connivance of the local authorities. Deflated rubber dinghies slashed open for anything valuable now lay like gutted sea-mammal carcasses along the shores. Claims over their cheap made-in-China boat engines lead bystanding profiteers to get into bloody fistfights. The equally coveted solid wood boat floorboards are sawn into animal pens, household furniture and balcony separators by local farmers calling dibs on the approaching boats on the horizon. The fluorescent orange grit lining the island's coastline in aerial photographs trying to depict the environmental impact of the 'refugee crisis' is made of fake, non-buoyant lifejackets. Reluctant business start-ups aiming at the sustainable recycling of these materials then popped up under municipal permission, as refugee trash falls within their jurisdictional 'assets'. Small initiatives create tents, hand-made bags, wallets, accessories, and other trinkets to then be sold to cover the needs of refugee reception. After everyone has had their pick, the eventual refuse is gathered in towering mountains at the new 'refugee debris' municipal dump near Molyvos and gets buried every few months. This extensive remediation of waste – both material and human – is approached not merely as a refashioning of something defective or polluted, or as revaluation and realignment back into familiar, everyday political economies of materials discarded within social/ecological environments in which they remain fundamentally 'other'. Remediation also signifies an active reworking of the meanings and affects attached locally to those materials within an eroding social and physical ecology.

Then there are the dead; the hundreds of bodies which those warm azure borders have claimed. Hurriedly buried; unnamed but for a number, a date, and an amateur phenotypical reading to approximate their nationality. Unmourned, unmarked small hills on the far outskirts of the consecrated grounds meant for the proper burial of the entitled. Right by the dumping ground, 'matter out of place' even beyond death's boundaries. Row after row, stumbled upon accidentally in the midst of a forest clearing. Never

accounted for, sunk at the bottom of the shallow sea – a sea in which amateur divers have stopped spearfishing, for fear of what they, or others, might encounter in their depths; whose fresh fish the colourful wooden *tratas* unload each day along the jetty, yet some housewives refuse to buy and cook, for fear of what they have fed on. 'There is the [financial] crisis, yes...' a woman around her sixties chuckled at me with a conspiratory smile outside a fishmonger's one morning after surveying what was on sale and getting ready to walk away; '...the crisis has always been the crisis, but we have not turned into cannibals yet!', referring to the fresh sardines' bargain price that morning with a dark 'humor' connotation as to what the fish had eaten in these waters. It is not a rare phenomenon that dead bodies – mostly of children – are washed ashore or caught up in fishermen's nets, several weeks past their unreported drowning.

In the absence of coherent national and European asylum policies, the local refugee reception structures on the island proved unable to cope. Paired with the failure of the national social-welfare policies, the results were catastrophic for a large segment of the local population – both permanent residents and those passing through. New migrants and the receiving communities were left to cope with – and against – each other, under the tremendous pressures for change occurring in the local and extended society. This sudden surge in arrivals caused rapid and massive transformations at multiple levels and between various groups (Rozakou 2015). As social safety-nets were absent, people were called to fend for themselves individually and collectively as well as they could in an unstable context of heightened ambiguity. Meanings, identities, trajectories and prospects remained in constant flux and yet impinged on very specific localities: Lesvos as a whole, together with several key sites of refugee reception such as shores and camps.

The emergent articulations of liminality, expressed through the off- and online narratives of people encountered on the island and then followed backwards and forwards for months or even years, reveals an expanded liminality and broadens its gauge far beyond the previously delimited boundaries within which it was conceptualized and such practises took

place. Liminality metamorphoses into an extended and mobile condition following those trapped in this 'middle' stage, having the capacity to also encompass all others who participated in this process at different stages and in different capacities and who eventually discover that they have restricted – if any – possibilities of exit.

This observation is my main point of contrast with the classical conceptualization of a ritual passage. According to its definition, it is mandatory to follow a linear progression through the three successive stages. Each step in this passage is integral to its constitution, and reaching the final aggregation and then eventual exit from the ritual is imperative. This linearity has been previously contested as societal and other processes may impede the final transition of liminal persons to reincorporation. However, upon entering the state of liminality in the current refugee context in Lesbos and all over Greece, there is no guarantee of linearity, nor any longer of social upgrade upon completion – no assurance of consummation or even exit. Instead, a debilitating circularity prevails, as failed migrant trajectories loop back within the purgatory of the un/enclosed liminal carceral space (Moran 2013) that the extended south-eastern European borderscape has come to denote: the whole Greek territory, along with its border islands and their camps of subhuman conditions, and even beyond – deep into the recesses of euphemistically prettified 'safe third countries'. Within this situation, any spatial or legal forward movement becomes almost impossible, any sense of time is lost, law becomes some kind of Orwellian 'doublespeak', lives are arrested in deadlock, and passage cements into impasse.

Conclusion: borderscapes as heterotopias of routinized liminality

Borderscapes (Bocchi *et al.* 2015) emerge as 'manifold overlapping topologies' around borders resulting from the interplay of discontinuous and fragmented bordering practises between multiple actors. Irregular migrants and refugees who (tres)pass these diffused borders 'trigger' them into activation and deployment of the full range of their different aspects (human, technological, legal etc.), turning landscapes

around them into borderscapes: charged fields of dynamic inter-action; juxtaposed non-homogeneous places rife with power relations and hierarchies between relationally positioned actors.

Caught up in the midst of the recent convulsions of the European border and asylum crisis, the socio-spatial identity and political geography of Lesbos are being radically reshaped from a quaint holiday destination, where foreigners and locals alike had the opportunity to enjoy leisurely mobility across the liquid Greek-Turkish borders, into an interstitial transit space, a 'paramilitarized' emergency area, a 'war zone without a war' (Papataxiarchis 2016). The concentration of such diverse assemblages of human, material and symbolic border manifestations in such a limited area turns Lesbos into a complex configuration of space and time in which simultaneous competition and convergence are manifested. Combining landscapes of crisis and deviance, it functions as a dual 'heterotopia', one of those rare 'privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis... in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to where the required mean or norm are placed' (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986: 24–25).

The Aegean borderscape is comprised of super-imposed heterotopias emerging from the contact of various actors inhabiting, defining or defending the south-eastern European borders, with irregular migrants defying them. Borders and il/legality operating in the everyday life of persons within this landscape create a condition of liminality transcending the spatial confines of these places. Through those actors' on- and offline interactions and the legal and political responses towards them, the spaces which refugees transit or occupy get connected and liminality spills over from the geography 'the closest-in' – the body – to the wider European, Middle Eastern and global sphere.

The borderscape/'refugee-scape' (Papataxiarchis 2016) of Lesbos has become yet another zone of liminal, unpredictably permeable un/enclosed carceral space in a series of such spaces – the first upon

European soil for the irregular newcomers. Located along the fraught political border between Greece and Turkey, Lesvos has been a space of confluence and conflict for generations, a liminal place in the historical geography of the eastern Mediterranean attesting to the vitality and full complexity of and at the border throughout centuries. In this contemporary juncture it reveals the emerging configurations and crises of the existing EU bordering and asylum systems in all their complexity and complicity in the perpetuation of human plight.

Irregular migrants and receiving communities on Lesvos are caught in a protracted and broadened crisis context providing an example of liminality's gradual socio-spatial and temporal 'stretching' into a dominant and portable condition experienced at both the individual and the collective level. Liminality hyperconcentrates into the classic liminal spaces of its two camps on Lesvos and other refugee arrival and reception areas (beaches, roadsides, ports etc.). It simultaneously diffuses, permeating the entirety of the Greek territory where, as of April 2016, approximately 55,000 (officially registered) refugees remain trapped, followed by thousands of itinerant volunteers and activists, mingled with locals in whose backyard this humanitarian tragedy unfolds. The overlapping social, material, spatial and temporal dimensions of their im/mobility collide within the oversignified borderscape in confluence, friction or clash, while people get caught as the ineluctable collateral damage of im/mobility regimes and bordering practises within this expansive liminal heterotopia.

The routinization of liminality occurs as a process whereby the 'extraordinary' liminal stage, previously vested only in particular people going through particular processes in particular spaces, is gradually stretched spatially and temporally, along with various co-performers of the ritual passage. As extraordinariness is reduced to a routine narrative repeatedly emerging through fieldwork observations, liminality emerges center-stage, not merely as socio-spatial marginality and exclusion but as a prolonged experience of transformation and transition. It is a dynamic process providing a lens through which to examine the perplexing 'time-spaces' and interactions between

multiple actors involved in the failing asylum system on Europe's margins: from the monolithic conceptualizations of scale-spanning structures of authority and control, to the agency, resistance and resilience by individuals and collectivities on its receiving end. This protracted sense of liminality may also open up different legal and socio-spatial relations continuously re/produced through the mobility strategies, tactics and practises of various actors who, even while undergoing profound experiences of displacement, alienation and destitution, may maintain and rework a certain sense of being-at-home in the world above and beyond the given untenable conditions of protracted liminality.

Acknowledgments

With the usual caveats, I am grateful to Giorgos Tyrikos-Ergas for introducing me to the concept of liminality and sharing his longstanding observations on Lesvos with me. I am wholeheartedly thankful to Austin Kocher for his valuable comments throughout the development of this article.

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III

Writings on the Wall: Textual Traces of Transit in the Aegean Borderscape

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The Greek island of Lesbos has a centuries-old history as a site of departure, arrival, coexistence and resistance for the forcibly displaced. This migratory chronology, however, was overwritten by the unprecedented attention that Lesbos attracted during the 2015 'refugee crisis'. This paper examines vernacular aspects of bordering, specifically the practice of border crossers and other groups standing in solidarity with—or against—them, to inscribe messages on walls in and around carceral and public spaces, viewed as a process of constructing and contesting borders from below. Closely reading numerous inscriptions collected around Lesbos reveals how borders are constructed, enacted and contested from below through borderlanders' discursive practices on some of the very walls that constitute the EU frontier's material infrastructure. This study aims to advance understandings of the historical continuity of the Aegean borderscape as a complex landscape of border effects and affects that exceed borders' legal, infrastructural and political dimensions, while also highlighting the persistence and importance of personal agency, self-authorship and identity reclamation by border populations even in the direst of circumstances

INTRODUCTION

Between 2015-2016 more than 1.3 million refugees and migrants crossed the Mediterranean Sea in search of safety and opportunity in Europe (IOM 2015, 2016). The vast majority came through Greece, and the Eastern Aegean islands of Lesbos, Kos, Chios and Samos (UNHCR 2016a, 2016b). Although pathways of irregular migration into Europe have periodically shifted between the sea and land borders of Greece (Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014), the number of maritime arrivals has steadily increased since the early 2000s.

The vast increase in refugee arrivals through Greece's sea borders during 2015 and 2016 put Lesbos 'on the global map of the great disaster

sites of the 21st century' (Papataxiarchis 2016, p. 9) particularly given the island's relatively small size and population.¹ While these developments attracted unprecedented, although short-lived, global attention to the perilous refugee journeys to Europe (Giannakopoulos 2016), they also obfuscated the Aegean islands' centuries-old history as well-established sites of departure, arrival, co-existence, and resistance for the forcibly displaced (Giannuli 1995; Tsimouris 2001; Karachristos 2006; Hirschon 2007; Myrivili 2009). Textual traces across Lesbos, however, tell a different story, speaking to contemporary border policies through the lived experiences of people who have confronted them through the years. It is to those texts and symbols—

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carceral inscriptions and urban graffiti—that we turn to in this paper. Inmate writings from the interior walls of the now defunct detention center of Pagani are brought into conversation with border-related graffiti from the streets of Lesvos' capital, Mytiléne, and with writings from the barbed-wire-lined walls surrounding the First Reception Center, and EU Hotspot of Moria. The iconography and wording of these 'writings on the wall' narrate loss and survival, reclaim lost lives and identities, while rendering countless testimonies of passage and peril at the borders visible and legible.

This paper argues for the empirical and conceptual importance of collecting, studying and interpreting art and graffiti in studying borders diachronically. In doing this, it offers a conceptual framework for interpreting the borderscape of Lesvos through the practice of graffiti writing by 'borderlanders'. The term 'borderlanders' is hereafter not used as an umbrella term that indiscriminately lumps together discrete populations and persons, but as a descriptive term denoting the people that are, or have been present, within specific critical border sites. Those are people who, for whatever reason, happen to inhabit, transit through or operate within such border spaces, synchronously or at different times, under many capacities (encompassing not only migrants and refugees, but also activists, locals, and others alike). In this research, these borderlanders are brought together by their choice to leave textual markings in public spaces as testimonies of their experiences of, and perspectives on, borders, which reflect the struggles over the meaning of borders, as perceived by the various groups that are affected by them.

As a critical location of migration and border enforcement, Lesvos has played a significant role in the construction of official and vernacular imaginaries of contemporary borders as humanitarian/securitized spaces. While official narratives around borders attempt to moderate and mediate their day-to-day effects, the writings retrieved from walls around the island relay diverse, locally-derived accounts of borders' meaning and impact on people's lives. By focussing on borderlanders' inscriptions, this study emphasizes their role as unbidden authors of the border's memory and history from below.

The article proceeds in four parts: Firstly, the analytical framework is outlined, drawing on critical border studies and borderscapes, and on graffiti scholarship. The concept of border graffiti is then elaborated, with special attention to its usage and meaning in the Greek 'crisis' context. Data collection and analysis are then detailed, followed by a problematisation of the inscriptions' linguistic and cultural translation. The affective geographies

along the Greek-Turkish border are then laid out, along with the empirical material's presentation and analysis according to the five themes identified in our data. The concluding section focusses on the experiential topography of the Aegean borderscape, highlighting border graffiti's importance in challenging hegemonic discourses on borders and migration and communicating how the highly securitized border landscape of the Aegean Sea has been being experienced, confronted and negotiated diachronically from below.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical border scholars have shown how borders cannot merely be understood as fixed territorial lines of separation at the edge of the nation-state (Balibar 1998), but rather as a 'complex choreography of border lines in multiple lived places' (Gielis & van Houtum 2012, p. 797). Borders do not 'simply exist', but are rather 'performed into being through a range of practices and 'rituals' (Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2012, p. 729). Read through these practices, borders derive their meaning from social interactions and become recognizable through struggles over belonging and non-belonging (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr 2007a, pp. xxvii-xxix). To capture these struggles, we employ the notion of the borderscape, which embraces a 'mobile, perspectival, and relational' study of borders (ibid., p. x), and draw on recent borderscape conceptualisations, which incorporate performative, participatory and senseable dimensions of borders (Brambilla 2014; Brambilla et al. 2015).

Such an approach thus grounds the abstract notions of borders and borderscapes on specific practices (i.e. top-to-bottom ones, such as surveillance and controls as well as bottom up insurgent ones, such as trespassing and rescuing), materialities (i.e. fences, walls and documents) and affects (i.e. fear, hope, indignation), and renders perceptible diverse situated experiences, negotiations and representations of/at territorial borders by different actors. The importance of a multiperspectival approach to border studies is thus underlined. This entails 'studying borders differently' and 'acknowledging the alternative boundary narratives' (Rumford 2012 p. 889), thereby foregrounding the importance of the visible and invisible work of those that inhabit border spaces. This plurilocal and plurivocal borderwork (Mignolo 1995, p. 15) is undertaken locally by 'multiple actors in this geo-political-cultural space' (Perera 2007, p. 206), turning the Aegean borderscape, with Lesvos at its epicentre, into 'a landscape of competing meanings' (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr 2007b, p. xv) and contrasting affects between the various groups that cross or inhabit it. Attentiveness to borders' and state's affective composition

and geography (Laszczkowski & Reeves 2015; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Reeves 2011) gives rise to the notion of affective borderscapes, within which the top-down bordering processes, as well as their bottom-up contestation are exerted not only practically but also affectively, and can be tracked through their human and material traces in space.

Upon the territory of Lesvos, marked deeply by shifting patterns of human migrations and the changing discourses and practices around them, the microgeographies of migrant arrival, incarceration and inhabitation are being continuously reinscribed. Among other public discursive terrains, the island's walls offer ample space for unmediated, interactive expression on borders in the form of graffiti. The inscribed messages reveal the clash or correlation of experiences, perceptions and interpretations of global bordering processes, and their local effects on individuals.

Graffiti, in its broadest sense, is the practice of unauthorized mark-making in the form of written expressions and drawings, which are scribbled, etched or painted on various surfaces, often anonymously or pseudonymously, usually within public view. It is a complex and inherently spatial practice whose exact delimitation remains problematic due to the multiple definitions and typological categorizations attributed to it (Brighenti 2010). General perceptions of graffiti range from unauthorized artistic expression, at best, to a public order violation and an act of transgression, at worst. Graffiti has also been described as an unobtrusive indicator of values and attitudes not just at a personal but also at a social level (Stocker at al. 2009), especially with regard to beliefs and sentiments that lie outside the margins of acceptable norms of ordinary social life (Gonos, Mulkern, & Poushinsky 1976). It is a liminal practice not only socially, but also spatially, as it mostly occurs in 'transitional areas where social boundaries are blurred and normal rules of conduct and role expectations are held in abeyance or even in opposition' (Blake, 1981 p. 95). As a liminal practice, this transgressive and ritualized communicative process is suspended 'betwixt and between': it is situated between visual and verbal expression, pictorial and textual inscription, anonymity and identity reclamation, artistic expression and defacing.

Graffiti has been widely studied within anthropology, linguistics, arts, history, archaeology, criminology, psychology, gender studies, sociology and urban geography, among other disciplines (Bloch 2012; Burnham 2010; Dax 2015; Frederick 2009; Giles & Giles 2010; Klingman, Shalev, & Pearlman 2000; Lachmann 1988; Leong 2016; Otta et al. 1996; Philipps 2015). Within the field of border and migration studies graffiti has been approached from perspectives that emphasize its significance as an

aesthetic and artistic expression around/about borders (Al-Mousawi 2015; Alvarez 2008). However, it still remains largely under-researched regarding its content and semiotics. A few notable exceptions refer to inscriptions of border-crossing migrants in highway box culverts across the US-Mexico border (Soto 2016); border graffiti as a contestation of national border policies and an attempt at recapitulating an alternative sense of belonging (Madsen 2015); the feelings and experiences of intercepted migrants as revealed through the messages left on the walls of a Belgian police station (Derluyn et al. 2014); and tagging made by immobilized stateless people on the West Bank wall (Fieni 2016).

In the Greek context, urban public spaces have had central role in the manifestation of social struggles and the expression of popular discordance. The country's turbulent political past dating back to the period of the rise of the military junta of 1967-1974 and its fall (Metapolitefsi)², and the toleration with which such unauthorised public writing has generally been dealt with by the authorities and citizens alike have been conducive to the pervasiveness of the phenomenon. These longstanding practices of public expressions of discordance have commonly taken place through politicized street art and slogan writing, which have utilized urban landscapes to engage publics in dialogues about contemporary social conditions (Avramidis 2012; Tsilimpounidi 2015; Tsilimpounidi & Walsh 2010). In recent years, the corrosive effects of the enduring financial crisis, paired with the increasing influx of migrants and refugees, have reinforced sociopolitical discontent and have entrenched a sense of pervasive social injustice. Human rights' encroachment, intensification of socioeconomic precariousness and marginalization are conditions nowadays experienced not just by migrant populations, but by large segments of the violently reshuffled Greek society as well.

The magnitude and pervasiveness of contemporary social discontent has gradually extended the writing of political graffiti, as a form of non-mediated communication, beyond large Greek urban centers, such as Athens. In towns all over Greece, such as Lesvos' capital Mytiléne, the formerly kempt, white-washed walls are nowadays saturated with graffiti, stencils, posters and stickers, and the palimpsest of narratives produced by the social realities and struggles in Greece, and beyond, as it has also been documented in previous research (i.e. Karathanasis and Kapsali 2018).

The concept of border graffiti in our work encompasses textual and pictorial communication related to border experiences and practices occurring in spaces related with, but not necessarily in, close proximity to territorial state borders. Such border graffiti is created by various actors who occupy,

pass through and experience borderland space from contrasting positions. Border graffiti thus provides an ephemeral roadmap to navigate of borders' multiplicity and the juxtaposed meanings invested in them by different people (Sohn 2016). Messages often seem to be inscribed by any available means on any accessible surface, sometimes upon the very walls that comprise the infrastructure anchoring political borders in space. As walls become dialogic interfaces between borderlanders and other audiences, border graffiti (re)writes the frontier's narrative: it inscribes personhood, sketches perceptions, and intertwines experiences and memories from one's past and present, while carving out a sense of emplacement or dissociation in the midst of securitized spaces of existential erasure.

Similarly to other forms of public writing, we suggest that border graffiti can be seen as a medium for individuals and groups to challenge authority and contest existing policies (Moreau & Alderman 2011) as well as a way of exercising agency, self-determination and reclaiming one's identity in the context of sociospatial exclusion (Bruno & Wilson 2002), while being used as a means to cope with trauma (Klingman et al. 2000), or a testimony of immediate life experiences, such as concerns with one's self-identity, interpersonal relations, feelings and sentiments, clashing cultural understandings, as well as religious and political beliefs (Lucca & Pacheco 1986).

In crisis contexts, landscapes often become direct communicative devices in themselves—their various elements turning into message boards filled with statements of reclamation and survival (Bass, 2006 p. 6). Within the enduring crisis of migration management and the protracted humanitarian disaster on the outskirts of Europe, border graffiti and the messages of hope, heed or support that they convey trace the contours of the affective geographies that the EU's (supra)national border regimes have given rise to through the years.

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Our research draws upon a large collection of nearly 1000 images of graffiti photographed by the authors over several visits to three locations on Lesbos island. During our analysis, this dataset was consolidated into a collection of approximately 300 paradigmatic and highly illustrative images, a smaller selection of which is presented in this paper. The first set of photographs from the defunct (since 2009) Reception Facility of Pagani was collected in summer of 2012. Pagani is a one-story building with a small courtyard, located in the industrial area about 3 km northwest of Mytiléne town. No migrant reception facilities existed on Lesbos prior

to Pagani's opening. Before its commissioning to house detained 'illegal entrants' between 2004–2009, Pagani's premises stored animal fodder and were, therefore, unsuitable for human habitation. Pagani inmates (up to 1200 at a time) were confined indoors 24/7 in five overcrowded halls separated by makeshift plywood walls, with insufficient ventilation and hygienic facilities, and little to no privacy or personal space at all times. The quality of migrant reception ranged from severely deficient to inhumane throughout the facility's operation (Alberti 2010, p. 139; Cabot & Lenz 2012, p. 166; UNHCR 2009). Violent riots erupted in the autumn of 2009, which were preceded by the disruptions caused by the NoBorder Camp to the border's and the detention centre's function (Kasperek & Speer 2013, p. 261), leading to the eventual closing of Pagani.

The messages found on the rotting plywood walls in 2012 remained silent witnesses of the deplorable conditions within the detention center. Detainee inscriptions were more closely photographed in the one of the two accessible ground floor halls, and in the women's and children's section on the first floor. Photographs of inscriptions found within the third ground floor hall, which remained locked, were taken through its door and window grills, and through holes dug by detainees through the decaying wood fiberboard. To the best of our knowledge this is the only collection of inscriptions of such breadth from this location, adding to its historical and evidential importance.

The downtown area of the capital of Lesbos, Mytiléne, was the second location of graffiti inscriptions' collection over multiple fieldwork visits between 2012 and 2016. The picturesque town is the administrative capital of the island of Lesbos, and of the prefecture of North Aegean. The refugee 'crisis' has been attracting a broad range of individuals, from activists and volunteers to world-renowned artists. Alongside locals, they have left their marks on public walls, defunct telephone booths, bus stations, shop windows etc., which are inundated with various types of graffiti. This heterogeneity of authors diversifies significantly the content of the border/refugee-related graffiti. Local and international activist messages are mixed with purely artistic creations, such as the murals of the month-long 'Symbiosis Lesbos Art Festival' that took place in the summer of 2016 (Symbiosis Lesbos 2016).

The collected material is analytically fragmented not only regarding the internal taxonomies of graffiti as a communicative medium, but also concerning the differentiation of their authors' motives and the classification of their content. To address this conundrum, graffiti categorised as purely aesthetic expression is purposefully excluded from this

analysis, and we focus was placed on predominantly textual messages discursively oriented towards border and refugee politics and affects instigated by them.

The registration center/camp of Moria, located 6.5 km northwest of the town of Mytiléne is the third location of graffiti collection. The premises of Moria were part of the disused military base 'Paradellis' of the Mechanized Infantry of the Hellenic National Guard and functioned as a center for First Identification of asylum seekers since 2013. Its operation proved insufficient and dysfunctional ever since arrivals started picking up in early 2015: throngs of asylum seekers squatted the nearby olive groves awaiting their registration. On October 16th, 2016 an EU 'hotspot' was inaugurated within the premises of Moria amidst the steep increase of asylum seekers (up to 5-10.000 arrivals daily). On the same day, Andrea Rigoni, Italian MP and rapporteur of the Migration Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) gave a new dimension to EU borders and their functional logic upon inspecting the facilities of Moria with his statement: 'Our impression is that this is Europe's new frontier – in this center. Outside this center, we are outside Europe' (Amna.gr 2015).

Soon after the EU-Turkey Statement on the return of inadmissible asylum seekers to Turkey was implemented on the 18th of March 2016, the remaining asylum seekers' settlements in the adjacent fields were violently cleared out and Moria became a closed registration center overnight. The living conditions of asylum seekers, however, have remained extremely challenging throughout Moria's operation to this day (Rozakou, 2017a p. 40). Several NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch, have reported how the 'lack of police protection, overcrowding, and unsanitary conditions create[s] an atmosphere of chaos and insecurity in Greece's razor wire-fenced island camps' (2016, para. 2).

During our September 2016 visit, unauthorized entry to the camp was prohibited. We roamed the former settlement's scattered remnants on the nearby hillside, where traces of the olive grove squat still existed. We photographed inscriptions written with pens and markers on trees and street signs; bold spray-painted slogans on concrete walls; verses etched on moss and lichen, names carved on once wet cement. A few images of graffiti from the hotspot's inaccessible interior were also taken from the street.

Analysis began with the large photographic collection's consolidation and selection of approximately 300 illustrative items. The graffiti's deterioration due to weather exposure, wall dilapidation and other interventions often called for the photo-

graphs' digital enhancement to aid readability. Minimal correction of the images' exposure, sharpness and colour were made to this end. Names and personal information have been partially redacted prior to publication to ensure anonymity. An inductive and iterative qualitative content analysis was then undertaken. Each photograph often depicted multiple instances of graffiti, written in nine identified languages and dialects (English, French, Arabic, Greek, Farsi, Pashtun, Urdu, Somalian and Sinhala). Each graffiti instance was then categorized as a separate entry and was individually reviewed based on its form (text or image), language, and location of retrieval.

Each photograph was then catalogued with a brief description of its content, its transcription, an English translation, if necessary, obtained with the help of translators, and some reflective comments based on our interpretive reading. Despite the numerous inherent epistemological and methodological issues around translation across languages, which often remain unaddressed in cross-cultural research (Temple & Young 2004) the use of culturally-aware translators was indispensable in this research as the inscriptions' content would have otherwise been inaccessible to us.

The resulting double translation and representation of the empirical material (first by the translators from languages that the authors do not have command of, and, secondly, by the authors during the writing process) imposes additional limitations on the validity and reliability of the analysis, even more so in the absence of the messages' original authors (Twinn 1997). As explained below, however, the importance and rarity of the empirical material justified our analytical approach, and our eventual decision to consult translators.

Wishing to remain faithful to the linguistic and cultural content of the graffiti, we initially consulted native speakers of the inscriptions' languages, some of whom had been previously detained in Pagani or Moria, sourced through our personal contacts. Translators provided textual and, occasionally, cultural interpretation of the writings, which occurred during informal conversations. They were shown high-resolution photographs of the border graffiti and were asked to identify any texts they recognised, translate them into English, and briefly reflect on them if they wished to. In this way we attempted a 'crossing [of] research borders' and engaged interpreters, often with asylum-seeking background, as research collaborators (Hennink 2008, pp. 30-32; Temple & Edwards 2002). Their responses and interpretations were later verified with the help of independent, academically-affiliated native speakers.

The most prominent themes emerging from border graffiti's analysis were: identity and agency (re)clamation and inscription in a state of liminal waiting, encouraging and advising others in similar position, coping with border-induced embodiment and affects, and resisting border politics. These interrelated tropes appeared persistently to varying degrees, despite the spatial and temporal variation of this research across three fieldwork locations and over many years.

This type of research poses numerous limitations. Firstly, images for this study cannot possibly reflect the entire range of expression of borderlanders in Lesvos: open-ended as graffiti writing might be, it is still a selective practice, allowing expression only to those possessing the means and ability to articulate their thoughts in writing. Moreover, the selectivity of this process is exacerbated through the serendipitous process of the inscriptions' discovery. Conclusions cannot be considered authoritative, either, as all information available to us was imparted through the inscriptions in the absence of their authors. The disambiguating of motives, affects, thoughts and meanings is particularly difficult after-the-fact and necessarily based on assumptions. Every effort was made from the authors', however, to remain true to their meaning, including focussed discussions with former Pagani detainees and the assistant translators to contextualize and comprehend the graffiti's form and content.

WRITING AFFECTIVE GEOGRAPHIES ON THE EUROPEAN BORDER WALL

Inscribing and reclaiming identity in liminal waiting

A striking observation made while studying the photos from Pagani was its walls' inundation with inscriptions. Texts of varying sizes mottled every writable surface: from sprawling Persian calligraphy in moisture-blotted red marker, to hidden ball-point pen scribbles and faint pencil jots. Like a towering diary of passage, the makeshift detention centre's high walls formed a message board of survival, overflowing with testimonies of people locked into transit.

Migration and refugee passage are liminal states, often forcing people into sociospatial limbo for extended and externally-set time periods, while the outcome of their waiting (release, deportation or the extension of detention) remains unpredictable (Boer 2015; Noussia & Lyons 2009; Papoutsis, Painter, Papada, & Vradis 2018). Deceleration or total arrest of migrants' journeys are, thus, not mere side effects of this process, but different means of states' 'frontier praxis' in themselves. The active usurpation

of irregular migrants' time by the authorities reveals the complex economics of illegality, which go hand in hand with the existing biopolitical dimensions of Europe's border management (Andersson 2014a, p. 795). Temporality is, therefore, a crucial parameter of the ways migration experiences are organized – where experiences of waiting are, as Conlon (2011, p.353) argues, both 'imbued with geopolitics' as well as 'actively encountered, incorporated and resisted' throughout the spaces that migrants and refugees inhabit. Pagani graffiti indicates the centrality of time-keeping in detained migrants' life, through their individualised methods of tracking the duration of their imprisonment (Figure 1). Most commonly, time-spans were marked textually by writing one's date of arrival (to Greece/Lesvos) or the date of their imprisonment, and their predicted day of eventual release, or 'liberation' (Figure 1c). Some marked days with rows of lines or crosses (Figures 1b, 1e), while others used pictographic methods of time-keeping. The calendars' format indicates that the detention period's anticipated duration (around 30 days) was often known to the migrants in advance. Subsequently, they drew countdown matrices of fixed duration, such as columns or rows of outlined circles, which were later filled in as days passed (Figure 1d). This time-keeping method indicates an attempt to reinstate a sense of predictability in the migrants' uncertain temporality of passage, while maintaining a future-oriented perception of time and an impression of onward progression of their journey. Differences in the recorded length of imprisonment indicate the prevalent arbitrariness of living and administrative conditions faced by migrants, of which detention is but one.

Unlike the anonymity that customarily characterizes graffiti messages, Pagani detainees strived to retain their eponymity (Figure 2). People's names and detailed biographical information were shared on the walls – often down to their town and neighbour-

Figure 1: Tracking time in detention (Pagani 2012). Photos by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni.

Figure 2: Inscriptions of personal biographical and contact information (Pagani 2012) Photos by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni.

2a: tarboes_XXX@yahoo.com; XXX_3000@yahoo.com.

2b: X. Wacan / 01/11/2007 / Soomaali / C. Dhako / Tell 698183XXX/ Ateen (Athens).

2c: C. Sooga / Lay Mytilini-22-07-05 / K. Baxay 31-8-05 / Email: SaXXX@hotmail / Soomaali.

2d: A. Rouamba / Geswende / 29/03/06 / Burkina Faso / Ouagadougou / Samandin / Secteur 7.

2e: Memento of A. Haidari from Helmand Province, district of Hazar Jooft Laki sector village Qaria Sokhta / entry to the camp 16/10/2004 exit from the camp 16/01/2005.

hood of origin (Figures 2d, 2e), email addresses and phone numbers (Figures 2a, 2b, 2c), as well as nicknames and different self-ascribed identity markers (e.g., 'Ghetto Boss', 'Djolof 4 Life' – not pictured here).

The practice of sharing such personal and potentially compromising information publicly stands in direct opposition to the essence of the correctional spaces where they were found, where migrants would often conceal or falsify their personal details deliberately to obtain paperwork with more favourable information in the hope of further supporting their future asylum claims (Derluyn et al. 2014, p.7). In this case walls featured as message boards of emergency communication where one could mark themselves as 'safe and well', restore lost links with family and travel companions or forge new ones, and reaffirm their personal identity.

Figure 3: Ali's family introduction in English (Pagani 2012). Photo by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni. My father and my brother / my brother name Hassan / Hassan / ads / and my setter / my ste / setter [sister] name is Zattra / my name is Ali / my mother name is.

On the first floor, where women and minors were detained, the white walls offered the incarcerated children a minimal space for playful expression. Colourful crayon drawings of butterflies, flowers, stars and human figures were found, as well as attempts at exercising writing skills in Arabic, English and Somali. Ali's text (Figure 3) stood out, as he used the rough plaster wall as an un-erasable whiteboard upon which he practiced spelling his family's names, a testimony to the precedents for the persistent legal and policy practices around the often unlawful confinement of un/accompanied minors, and their separation from other family members. In sum, we perceive the graffiti found in Pagani as expressing the detainees' claim for a particular type of place- and time-based recognition and re-definition of their identity within the socio-spatial limbo experienced in the centre.

Contrary to the inscriptions in Pagani, graffiti found around Mytilène and Moria did not contain migrants' personal information. The only exception was a collection of stencils in Greek (Figure 4) identifying three migrants who had died between 2014 and 2015 in the Amygdaleza detention center near Athens (Morfis 2015). Probably spray-painted by local activists in an alleyway near the Mytilène port, these stencils indicate how struggles against border-induced violence suffered by migrants span across Greece, while commemorating the dead and bringing awareness to the conditions of their, largely unreported, deaths.

Encouraging and advising others

Another central trope commonly observed in many messages inside Pagani was the detainees' expres-

Figure 4: Stencils commemorating the deaths of three migrants imprisoned at the Amygdaleza detention center (Mytilène 2016). Photo by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni. Sayed Mehdi Ahbari / 23 years old / Amygdaleza / 10.02.2015; Mohamed Asfak / 24 years old / Amygdaleza / 02.11.2014.

sion of solidarity to other intercepted migrants, as well as offering advice, encouragement and wishing success to those coming after them. Gestures and expressions of camaraderie can alleviate the spatial and social isolation experienced by detainees and help the construction of a discretionary communal identity around their life stage they share at the time.

Courageousness is one of the main themes expressed in such messages and is often presented as a prerequisite for earning one's freedom (Figure

Figure 5: Messages of brotherhood and encouragement (Pagani 2012) Photos by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni.

- 5a: Liberty, courage.
- 5b: Courage my brother.
- 5c: You might get lost in the desert but you should never enter this camp [Detention in Pagani is worse than being lost in the desert].
- 5d: United we stand, divided we fall.
- 5e: Do not lament the treachery of time; long have dogs danced over the carcasses of lions [Do not be sorry about life's bad turns].

5a), along with the importance of resilience and fearlessness despite danger's or death's imminence (Figure 6d). Total strangers are warmly saluted as 'brothers' (Figure 5b), implying links of affinity growing between people affected by similar hardships. The significance of supporting each other and fostering unity and collaboration in the face of adversity is highlighted (Figure 5d), lest misfortune and defeat would come upon them. The advice to avoid detention in Pagani at all costs as it is worse than being lost in the desert is offered elsewhere, warning unsuspecting newcomers for what is to come (Figure 5c).

An excerpt from old Arabic poem of disputed authorship (Wikisource.org 2017) found inside Pagani (Figure 5e) highlights the significance of maintaining one's dignity and pride, and not resorting to self-pity and despair despite the degree of betrayal from one's given life circumstances. 'Pride is of great importance for an Arab and land is so as well. To be uprooted and then imprisoned by a foreigner (a westerner) is a great insult. It calls for self-pity and for pain. The lion is the prisoner, the migrant, the refugee, the undocumented and unwelcomed. The dog is the prison guard, the authority, etcetera.' (Salim, 27 years old, Syria, translator from Arabic). Despite their fatalism, the verses carry an implicit consolation to their imprisoned readers: 'Do not feel sorry because this is how life usually goes. Although defeated for now, you remain superior to your captors'.

Messages of support and solidarity, however, are

Figure 6: Border affects while in detention (Pagani 2012) Photos by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni.

- 6a: Only god's justice is perfect and absolute (faith, hope).
- 6b: We are afraid (fear).
- 6c: Drawing of frightening face (fear).
- 6d: Do not [be] fearful [even though] death [is] around a corner (courage, determination).

Figure 7: Symbols and signs of personal significance (Pagani 2012) Photos by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni.

- 7a: Drawings of a face; a yin-yang symbol; a swastika; an unidentified symbol resembling the peace symbol with additional details; the cedar of Lebanon with the Star of David on its top and the inscription 'The Lebanese Troops' at its bottom; the Iranian flag.
- 7b: Tanzania; the flag of Tanzania; pentagram star symbols with the inscription: 'S. Adam, B. Chavalha, P. Malik - The Jews. Arrival: 24 August 2005, Tanzania, The luckiest people in Africa. God bless Tanzania. Africa.
- 7c: Drawing of a broken heart containing a rising/setting sun over an open landscape to the left (evoking freedom or nostalgia), and a brick wall with a small grilled window to the right (signifying captivity).
- 7d: Drawing of two faces and two hearts pierced by an arrow.
- 7e: The outlines of three flags.
- 7f: The outline of Sri Lanka with the inscription 'Sri Lanka, Arrived 24.8.2005, K. Fernando, Manjula, Prabath, Anuva, 17.9.05 Janaka', and the words 'Sri Lanka' in Sinhala
- 7g: Drawing of a rose and the date 3-1-08.
- 7h: Drawings of a cross and a rosary; the name Morris in Sinhala.

not only exchanged between migrants. Locals and activists often write in support of migrants near spaces of incarceration and other public areas, holding ground against the advent of xenophobia and claiming pockets of public space as safe for the newcomers as demonstrated below (Figures 9 and 10).

Border embodiment and affect

As it has been empirically indicated so far, bordering processes are constituted not just through their more tangible aspects, such as the legal, infrastructural and political dimensions of borders (Andersson 2014b) but also through feelings, emotions, embodied experiences and affective dispositions by a variety of

Figure 8: A journey in search of justice, safety and self-realization, and arrival experienced as rebirth (Pagani 2012). Photos by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni.

- 8a: Date of birth 20.12.2008. At the black sea 10 o'clock at night in the international ship of Greece.
- 8b: My Africa why have you abandoned [?] for the [?]. In Africa there is no justice [?]. In Mauritania there is always danger. My name is [?] de Fufa.

actors (Navaro-Yashin 2012; Reeves 2011). By paying attention to the border-encountering bodies and their sensory and affective experiences we observe how complex emotional geographies of borders unfold in practice. Through the wall inscriptions, fragments of the visceral and affective synthesis of the borderscape are offered: vulnerability and discouragement are revealed; mental resilience and group solidarities are shaped, and encouragement is offered in an effort to maintain hope throughout the challenges of life in transit and detention. Inside Pagani, feelings of despondency, anguish and fear in the face of life-threatening dangers are expressed through writings and drawings (Figure 6). Religion plays a very important role throughout the entire migration trajectory and especially during times of distress and emotional and physical trial (Dorais 2007; Gozdziaik & Shandy 2002; Hagan & Ebaugh 2003). Writings across Lesvos—scribbled prayers, religious symbols and invocations to God—found in Pagani, support this claim (Figure 6a, 7h).

Expressions of love, affection and longing are also widespread. People profess love for their home countries, family members or beloved ones with words or symbols (Figure 7). Others imply how their support to dissident ideologies and those who express them remains unwavering, despite being part of what forced them to flee. A Somali detainee in Pagani, writes of his love for Hadrawi—a prominent Somali poet and songwriter who penned notable protest works ('I love Hadrawi', Pagani 2012—not pictured here). Nostalgia, homesickness and deep longing for freedom, are also expressed both in words and symbols, such as birds in flight, footsteps walking away, a broken heart with its right side made of brick wall, and a sunrise over an open field on its left (Figure 7).

Figure 9: Resisting border politics and calling for alternative visions for border and migration management (Mytiléne and Moria, 2015 and 2016). Photos by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni.

- 9a: Stop deportation - Solidarity with migrants. Migrants Welcome. NGO's Fuck off (Moria 2015).
- 9b: Common struggles of locals and migrants against the devaluation of our lives (Mytiléne 2016).
- 9c: No one is illegal. Solidarity with migrants (Moria 2016).
- 9d: No border - No nation (Mytiléne & Moria 2016).
- 9e: Racism makes wages drop (Mytiléne 2016).
- 9f: [Give] Papers to everyone (Mytiléne 2016).

Figure 10: Calls for one's right to movement, life and dignity (Mytiléne and Moria 2016). Photos by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni.

- 10a: Freedom of movement (Moria 2016).
- 10b: Movement of freedom (Moria 2016).
- 10c: 25/7 - Dead migrant in Kara Tepe. Welcome to European dream (Mytiléne 2015).
- 10d: 25/07/2015 - Dead migrant in Kara Tepe. Thankfully the tourists did not see it (Mytiléne 2015).

Complex emotional entanglements are sometimes revealed, such as feelings of betrayal and abandonment by one's country/continent of origin, which sets off the migratory journey in search of justice, safety and self-realisation (Figure 8b), while the moment of border-crossing and rescue by the coastguard is experienced as rebirth (Figure 8a). Contrary to what previous research indicates about male-designated locations (Ferris 2010; Soto, 2016; Yogan & Johnson 2006), no textual or visual obscenities were observed in Pagani, nor insults or defacement of others' messages and/or religious symbols.

As previously discussed, political graffiti in Greece is a prevalent communicative and expressive medium and a ubiquitous part of the urban landscape (Avramidis 2012; Tsilimpounidi 2015; Tsilimpounidi & Walsh 2010). Much like in other Greek cities, writings around Moria and Mytiléne often express political indignation and anger (Karathanasis and Kapsali 2018). The writings that this paper focuses on were directly related to migrant arrivals and the refugee crisis and used explicit language against authorities and institutions involved in the EU border regime, decrying their policies and condemning their practices (see Figures 9, 10 and 15).

Resisting borders and border politics

Most documented inscriptions from Mytiléne and Moria are politically informed slogans that contest current border policies (Figures 9 and 10). Some chastise the workings of the European Union's border regime, proclaim a different vision for immigration rights and border management and question whether certain foundational principles of both the Greek and European identity remain tenable in the light of the border and migration policy mishandlings.

Calls for borders' abolishment and the cessation of deportations are common, as is the expression of indignation towards the role of humanitarian NGOs and the 'refugee rescue industry' (Figure 9a). Many messages demand the abolition of borders, safe passage, the fair processing of asylum claims and the supplementation of documents to the newly arrived (Figures 9d and 9f). Others speak against the illegalization and criminalization of migration (Figure 9c). Some messages address widespread populist and xenophobic discourses, dismissing the purported negative effect of migration on the labour market (Figure 9e). Some inscriptions deconstruct the division between locals and migrants, indicating common struggles faced by Greeks and migrants, and the need for joint action against the compounded crises they are subjected to: the financial one, and that of refugee reception and asylum (Figure 9b).

Calls to an ever-more restricted freedom of movement, as both a universal human right and one of the central EU policy pillars, are spray-painted on the container dwellings inside Moria (Figures 10a and 10b). Others expose the illusion that the EU is an area of safety and prosperity, debunking the myth of 'the European dream', with which the forcefully displaced are violently faced upon the continent's doorstep (Figure 10c). Scattered graffiti elsewhere comments on human rights' infringements such as one's right to life, liberty, security and equality in dignity and rights. Another alludes to the concealment efforts regarding the humanitarian crisis' magnitude on the island to safeguard the tourism industry and keep holiday-makers undisturbed (Figure 10d). Tourists' and migrants' wellbeing is valued differently, according to the graffiti, and the experiences of their differentiated bodies are worlds apart, encountering the same landscape either as a holiday resort, or a 'death camp'. Migrants and tourists on Lesbos exist on two parallel, asymptotic planes, which, as in other beachfront border zones, prohibit encounters and meaningful engagement (Al-Mousawi 2015). Criticism is expressed towards the widespread discounting of Greece's long-standing migratory and refugee history, and the erosion of philoxenia (hospitality), Greece's dominant cultural code of dealing with alterity (Rozakou 2017b), indicated in graffiti such as these: 'Our grandfathers were refugees, our parents were migrants, us racists?', Mytilène; 'No detention can be hospitable', Mytilène—not pictured here.

Besides political graffiti, poem verses were also encountered (e.g., 'No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark, you only run for the border if the whole city is running as well', Moria 2016); proverbs on loss and longing for a homeland (e.g., 'Our only homeland is our childhood dreams', Moria 2016), and excerpts from the Quran (not pictured here). Even such instances of less personal graffiti, however, assert one's right of be/coming 'here' despite prohibitions and perils; urge migrants and activists to sustain hope in the face of adversity, and call out for solidarity with those affected by displacement and migration politics.

As Lesbos has turned into an emblematic example of the EU border regime's workings, aside from its prominent national administrative and symbolic stature, it now sets a global paradigm on practices of, and attitudes towards migration management. The messages expressed across its public spaces and at locations of critical importance—such as the Moria hotspot, the city hall, the coastguard building, the central square and the port facilities among others—indicate a microgeography of resistance and solidarity that includes border struggles across time and space, as well as across lines of gender, class, and nationality. They reassert the right of

newcomers to life, dignity, safety, personhood and presence as well as free mobility.

Their content resonates with questions raised by individuals, solidary movements and researchers elsewhere in Greece and in the world, calling for a just and humane resolution to the currently untenable migrant and refugee reception system both on Lesbos and elsewhere. As such, they echo wider political movements and discourses currently at play, and have, therefore, the potential to bring about broad and lasting sociopolitical effects. On the other hand, the almost absolute monopolization of public expression by locals and activists in the island's urban space—even though migrants and refugees roam the same spaces daily—indicates the persistent relegation of migrant voices into the margins of crucial discourses concerning their lives. As a result, an inadvertent process of rebordering takes place in the current debate on border politics.

CONCLUSION

The spaces of migrant and refugee arrival, transit and containment are rife with inscriptions that often remain unnoticed. Whether condemning contemporary migration and asylum policies, voicing solidarity with refugee struggles, expressing one's innermost feelings while in detention, or piecing together a wavering sense of identity, this paper suggests that such border graffiti can offer important insights about the ways hegemonic discourses on migration are being experienced, negotiated and confronted from below in more (or less) obtrusive ways.

The messages inscribed by various people and groups that inhabit or cross borders trace the experiential topography of the borderscape, telling us of the myriad ways the northern Aegean maritime frontiers can be 'experienced, lived as well as reinforced and blocked but also crossed, traversed and inhabited' (Brambilla 2015, p. 17). These inscriptions often express the complexities of identity construction and social belonging within localities embedded in the epicentre of national and international border policy contexts. In doing so, the actors engaging in border graffiti open up the question of 'de-essentializing the border landscape and reframing imaginaries that cope with the growing securitization of international limits' (Dell'Agnese & Amilhat Szary 2015, p. 9). The 'writings on the wall' that we have recorded in this paper speak directly to the ways in which borders are in many ways 'landscapes of competing meanings' (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007b, p. xv). As such, these inscriptions can also be perceived as bordering practices in themselves through which the border is 'performed into being' (Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2012 p. 729).

Whereas our analysis has departed from a close reading of these fleeting 'writings on the wall', the application of this phrase goes beyond its literal meaning to encompass its metaphorical dimensions. As such, the inscriptions serve as bearers of portentous, yet overlooked, notations of borders' incipient essence, which lies partly in their capacity to legitimize violent, exclusionary and discriminatory practices that dehumanize irregular border-crossers (Jones 2016). Border graffiti cues to the silenced genealogies of individual and collective frontier struggles and of the multiple transgressions transpiring within the Aegean borderscape, as told by those whom the workings of contemporary border regimes have relegated into the margins of society and discourse.

The presence of the border graffiti, much like that of the border crossers themselves, is fleeting. The messages of resilience and contestation of the current migration policies that they express, however, remain constant and congruent with border struggles in Greece and elsewhere in the world. Despite the silencing or marginalization of the voices that try to raise awareness and condemn the longstanding complicity of national and European authorities in the current bleak—if not downright outrageous—picture of refugee reception in Greece and the EU, these voices persist. They call out the systematic violations of human rights and expose the lack of basic provisions and the human suffering inside camps run by national and EU authorities.

Contrary to contemporary depictions, the border graffiti chronicled in this paper gives evidence that the smuggled migrants' presence on Lesbos had been as pervasive as it had been overlooked and deliberately unaccounted for since the late 1990s and early 2000s. Up until their recent explosive increase, the migrants' pre-sunrise arrivals and their trudging roadside convoys, their urban huddles and their squalidly incarcerated packs were an open secret among the local as well as inter/national authorities and publics. Little was said and even less was done for the remediation of the conditions they faced, similarly to what successive waves of displaced populations arriving at or departing from Lesbos' shores following centuries-old pathways experienced. In spite of the diachronic apathy to their plight, however, and the concerted efforts at effacing their traces, their inconspicuous writings offer us a counterhistory of passage today.

Despite attempts at haphazard prettifying of the physical and communicative space around refugee settings, highlighted by the rushed figurative, and quite literal, whitewashing of the reality on the ground, those unsolicited, spontaneous forms of expression still manage to seep through the surface.

The wall outside Moria's old entrance, now a locked gate on a side street, bears witness to the layers of ongoing discourse around migration management and the constant whitewashing of the authorities' failure to protect and upholding refugee rights (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Whitewashing the bordering practices of the EU outside Moria (Moria 2016). 'EU shame on you' Photo by Ioanna Wagner Tsoni.

NOTES

- 1 To grasp the magnitude of the phenomenon relative to Lesbos' geographical and population size (1,639 km² and 86,500 inhabitants as per the latest National Census of 2011), according to Hellenic Coast Guard data, 502,433 unauthorised entries were officially recorded on Lesbos in 2015 alone (Rontos, Nagopoulos and Panagos, 2019).
- 2 Metapolitefsi (Greek, translated as "polity/regime change") marks a period in modern Greek history after the fall of the military junta of 1967–74. It is the longest period of political and social stability in the modern history of Greece and includes the transitional period from the fall of the dictatorship to the 1974 legislative elections and the democratic period immediately after these elections until the present.

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Video Essay

'TRASH/TRACES: LIVES ADRIFT ALONG THE BORDER' VIDEO-ESSAY TEXTUAL REFERENCE AND TRANSCRIPTION

To open the video 'Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border' on a mobile device use a QR Code reader to scan this image. Alternatively, you may follow this URL:
<https://jnp.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/default/article/view/118/115>

Wide landscape shot. Through the early morning mist a distant mountain range descends towards the tranquil sea. Contrasting the sky's hues of peach and powder blue, a dark mass of tangled shapes creeps in from below. At first, it is difficult to tell apart the scattered forms that lie along the dusky shore. But as the eye lingers for a while longer on the margins, a chilling realisation strikes back. Stacked haphazardly along the rocks are the half-sunken, wrecked keels of broken fishing boats. Life rafts of rotting timber piled on each other, their hulls ripped apart by the waves' ceaseless grating, their beams nothing but scattered driftwood now.

The sound of the sea's rippling and its backdrag on small pebbles emerges, followed by piano keystrokes in a simple melody, as the film's only moving image unfolds next: A close-up of an orange boat ran aground. A small *trehantíri* fishing boat in the background chugs along, heading out for the day's catch. As the first slideshow image of the video-essay fades in, a female voice sounds, recounting the narrator's encounter with woman named Somaya at the Aegean's liquid borders.

Viewers are gradually introduced to the narrated events' timeframe, and to the ebbs and flows of the unfamiliar physical and mental landscape where the storyteller is situated. Multiple affective states are invoked and stitched together in a single story comprised of many moving parts – human and material ones alike. This is a story that is neither fable nor fact: although fictitious, it is forensically elicited by a series of seawashed objects, each of them carrying their personal material biography, and traces of their owners' life-stories, delivered impressionistically through the film's imagery, poetic narrative and sound.

The emerging border atmosphere appears haunted and inhospitable at first. Those who inhabit or cross it are mere castaways – refugees and rescuers alike: socially and spatially alienated figures at odds with themselves. As the story unfolds, however, the coastal borderscape will rise from a space of fear, loss, and perdition into a space of unanticipated encounters underpinned by unabated hope, despite hardships.

The mentally agonising and physically demanding efforts to locate and rescue a capsized refugee dinghy during the night sets the opening scene that will eventually connect the fluid trajectories of multiple moving bodies and objects at the border. The emotional bond between the narrator and Somaya, the invisible interlocutor, is asserted from the start: the storyteller calls her 'habibi' (my beloved)¹ and swears she, and others, did their best to assist Somaya and the other shipwrecked passengers.

The details of the capsizing, and the boat passengers' fate remains open question throughout the film. Dawn finds the narrator walking along the shore, collecting Somaya's, and her family's, belongings without knowing whether they are alive, or not. In doing so she tries to salvage not just the items themselves, but part of their owners'

¹ The word 'habibi' (حبيبي) means 'my beloved' in masculine form, in Arabic. Although the female form 'habibti' (حبيبتي) should have been used in the case of Somaya, the commonly used masculine form was used in this case, even though it is grammatically incorrect, to render as accurately as possible the actual speech forms used between (non-fluent in Arabic) rescuers/volunteers and (Arab-speaking) border-crossers on the ground.

personal- and family history, and elements of their identity. The narrator suggests being deeply affected by her findings as she cares and worries about their missing owners – Somaya, her son and daughter, and her husband. As the list of unclaimed items grows – handwritten notes, medicine, clothes, books, and shoes, among others – the atmosphere thickens, and emotions intensify: anxiousness and confusion prevail.

The long list of seawashed belongings includes objects revealing people's past-times to either kill the long idle hours of waiting, or others' active preparation for the dreamed life ahead: football cleats [01:37]; a scattered deck of playing cards [06:30]; teach-yourself language books, phrasebooks, and illustrated dictionaries [e.g. 09:10]; a teapot [7:34] and tea spoon [08:06], and someone's cherished stash of Alhamraa cigarettes from Aleppo, Syria [04:15], now soaked and useless, among others.

Not a single human body is visible, yet their contours and sizes, their demographics, ailments and petty everyday vanities are traced and reflected through their unclaimed possessions. Through the globalized currency of their immediately recognisable and relatable materiality, these objects carve out spaces of possible connection and affinity between refugee 'Others' and 'us': international fashion trends and cartoon characters, high-end brand imitations and ever-present personal products reach into the viewers' households and point out the similarities.

Silver girls' booties with furry pom-pom laces; heaps of baby clothes and feeding bottles; tiny, cartoon-ornate life vests and inflatable rings with a parent's breath still in their chambers; tubs of 'instant full volume' mascara from the Turkish brand 'Golden Rose' and glittery lip gloss; knockoff Chanel tracksuit sweaters, leaking bottles of hair-bleaching peroxide, menstruation pads and lacy push-up bras in bright colours are but a few of those objects that lay replete with the presence and personal traits of their owners. Individual quirks and preferences will quickly be effaced, however, as the same people who carried complementary hotel shampoo bottles from the four-star hotel Best Western Konak in Izmir [09:02], and could afford

staying at the five-star hotel Cham Palace in Damascus, from which a notepad was discovered, will have to somehow fit their bodies and their entire lives into rationed-out shoes and whichever donated clothes in their size they get handed out; make do with the deplorable conditions of Greek detention centers; accept and play along with the preconstructed perceptions and imposed 'refugee' identities, which had been already tailored and fitted on them before arrival.

The process of collection and profiteering over, or disposal and invisibilisation of the residual materials of refugee arrivals, much like the attempted removal and invisibilisation of the ever-growing numbers of people reaching the island is also touched upon. Much like the human waste of their camp-confined owners, refugee belongings are similarly deemed as dirt and trash that needs to be managed and processed out of sight, after the extraction of any residual value.

The physicality and fragility of the human body, its susceptibility to certain pains and ailments and the physical challenges (on top of the social and mental ones) of trying to adapt to the life conditions of forced migration (such as poor physical health, malnutrition and different aches and sicknesses of variable severity) are revealed by the medicine that border-crossers carried with them, which now lies scattered on the rocks: Naxiprazol 20mg capsules (for gastric disorders), Ponisstan 500mg tablets (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug), Entero-Stop pills (intestinal tract antibiotic), Faderin 100mg tablets (cardiovascular system drug), Tribion Forte 1000 (multivitamin), supplements for iron, folic acid and zinc (commonly prescribed during pregnancy) – most of them manufactured in Syria – are but a few of the wet and unusable drugs discovered on the rocks. These much-needed but now lost medicines are testament to the refugees' physical and mental ailments, which are part and parcel of the multifaceted traumas they are subjected to. Refugee bodies are recipients of an excessive amount of systemic biopolitical violence, which, after Foucault's thought (1978, p. 141), targets living subjects' organic biology as a means of controlling and subjugating them. Illness is also used by the narrator as a metaphor for the condition of sociocultural and mental breakdown suffered by the refugees themselves, and anyone who is empathically entangled in their lifeworlds – such as herself,

and other rescuers. Hard as the narrator tries to provide a much-needed remedy for both Somaya and herself, solutions remain elusive and undecipherable, as the monologue's narrative pace slowly picks up and escalates into an almost frantic crescendo of existential dread.

While most research on refugees pays attention to the embodiment of the researched, that of the researcher is rarely in focus. Within this landscape of ruination and loss, however, the narrator/rescuer/researcher admits having transcended the boundaries of being only bodily engaged with the events taking place around her, and merely bearing witness to the suffering of others. The narrative reveals her embodiment of a considerable degree of not only secondary/vicarious trauma (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2009; Argentero and Setti, 2011; Barrington and Shakespeare-Finch, 2013) due to her empathic engagement with the traumatic experiences of others, but also significant first-hand traumatising, as was the case for rescue workers providing aid to refugees and migrants at Lesbos during the time (Sifaki-Pistolla *et al.*, 2017; Chatzea *et al.*, 2018).

The emotional residue of her exposure to the everyday effects and affects of the border emerges throughout the narrative as a violent, nightmarish detachment from her former world, and as a relinquishment of one's voice, identity, at times even life itself. Eventually, the narrator admits the difficulty of transitioning back to the social world from which she initially set off from. The burden of her front-line experiences has become almost unsharable with others. This visceral reality which she carries within her body is in stark contrast with the virtual reality that mass media publicly broadcast on the refugee crisis. The perception gap between herself as a witness and media audiences regarding refugees' lives appears too wide to bridge through mere description despite her best efforts. The narrator is turned into a precarious existence herself whose paradoxical and disturbing sentiments and stories need to be 'smuggled' back into her former lifeworld like contraband items as an act of resistance to the dehumanising visual and narrative patterns imposed on refugees and migrants.

Gradually the narrator realises how fragile and dispensable one's deeply-held certainties and necessities are in the face of vital emergency, as well as the essential pliability of facts and personal fictions for the sake of one's mental, and even physical, survival in circumstances as dire as she is witnessing. As a result, throughout the narrative monologue, a self-reflexive account is interwoven, which reveals the narrator's increasing awareness of her own lifelong privilege and the corporeal, political, social and material conditions that have enabled it.

Experiences of alienation and depersonalisation emerge through the narrator's presence within- and subjection to the effects and affects of the border landscape, bringing back memories from previous encounters and stories shared with other migrants and refugees. Those stories often delineate border-crossing trajectories as personal rites of passage (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1967) during which loss and regeneration are successively, and inevitably, experienced as people are caught into- and try to escape from a condition of protracted sociospatial liminality. Yet throughout this process of erasure and forgetting, whether wilful or enforced, a certain continuity persists, if only regarding one's resilience and determination to be/come, despite the dehumanising and disorienting circumstances to which they are relegated.

These border losses may range from inconsequential to quite fundamental ones: from material objects (one's shoe), to deeply personal emotional memories and impressions (a mother's kiss), and from aspects of one's ascribed or avowed identity, to spending indefinite stretches of one's life in detention, or the loss of one's life. Yet, faced with the possibility of indiscriminate and unpredictable loss, material deprivation or even death becomes somewhat ordinary and contingent levies of boundary-crossing. This extraordinary mental transcendence of fear is measured not only in terms of a crossing's actual distance or duration, but through the gradual gathering of affective resilience and momentum through the anticipation and sustaining of successive losses.

The use of spirituality and faith as coping strategies, and as sources of strength during the forced migration journey emerges several times throughout the narrative. The liminal and sacral character of the passage through inhospitable landscapes is also highlighted by several items found on the shore, some of which have direct religious or spiritual connotations (holy books, prayer beads and protective amulets). These suggest the surrendering of one's fate in the hands of a higher power for psychological and physical support and safeguarding, and the meshing and merging of human and more-than-human agencies between people, objects, environments and spirits the hope of successful border-crossing. One of the most striking findings has been a customised pendant bearing Christian iconography – the image of Saint Christopher, patron of travellers, with the phrase 'pray for us, protect us in our travels' on its back.

A description of the fictional encounter between Somaya and the narrator draws the story to an end, by returning to the scene of a panicked arrival. A wide range of feelings unfolds in the few affectively-loaded seconds their contact lasts. Trust, gratitude, solidarity and hopefulness are mingled in the face of danger and find expression through a moment of blind trust (so commonly observed during sea-rescue incidents). Somaya passes her child and her only bag to the narrator, over the material boundary between danger and safety that the boat's failing frame signifies. In exchange, the narrator/rescuer offers back to Somaya a single word she has tried to memorize in Arabic: 'sabr'². This culturally familiar word to Muslim refugees, suggesting forbearance and patience, turns into an almost tangible object in the face of adversity: a lifeline on which both of them need to hold onto to overcome this experience. The film never spells out neither the narrator's nor Somaya's predicament. The farewell, 'until we meet again', leaves a window for some unknown, reconstituted future, someplace else some other time.

² 'Sabr' (Arabic: صَبْرٌ, transliteration: ṣabr) is one of the foundational virtues of the Islamic faith. Its meaning is complex and difficult to render in English and it can be translated as 'patience', 'endurance', 'perseverance', 'persistence' or 'forbearance' in the face of personal and collective setbacks and hardships. For a detailed discussion on the concept in the context of spiritual care, see Aoude (2016)

Transcription of the 'Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border' narrative

Somaya habibi,

I swear that night we scanned the horizon with our eyes wide against the wind till dawn, until they dried.

It was a small fishing boat. A small bright green dot on the night-vision scope at first.

A white crushed pomegranate that spread its fluorescent orange human seeds – babies, women, the elderly – into the sea minutes later.

I found your son's brown shoes soaked wet inside a plastic bag next morning. They didn't make it. Did he?

I found your daughter's princess glove – only the right one though. Her plastic doll was missing one tiny red shoe.

I found your mother's handwritten recipes, Somaya. All six pages of what's leftover of your heritage. Wet, torn and curled around the edges, but intact. I've dried and kept them for the day you'd come back asking for them.

Was it your husband's watch among the rubble and the driftwood that I found? Stopped at 9:30 sharp? Was it his weathered leather shoe? Were those his prayers through the rain and wind that we heard from the cliffs? The 99 blue beads of his misbaha now crusted in sea-salt and mud?

Was that your medicine? Your bag was all torn – your secret pains and ailments now scattered on the rocks; save for the ones you keep deep in your heart. Colourful pills for sea-sickness and headaches, for diarrhoea and skin rash. Tablets for diabetes and high blood pressure – you've been prescribed 3 a day, one with each meal. But now they all lie mixed up and I don't know what's what, to give you.

I do not know. What is the right medicine Somaya? What is the medicine for the heart? The heart – so it stops aching? What is the medicine for the mind, so it perhaps stops racing for a while? What is the medicine for this madness?

Water seeps in and flows and floods my sleep, Somaya, every night. In my dreams, I'm only drowning. I try to call for help, but there's no voice left in my lungs, just sea and darkness. I lie awake and long for peace – if for a moment. You do, too, I know.

And there was more Somaya – there was book I found: 'Learn English in 7 days'. A plastic comb. Four UNHCR registration papers folded together with all the faces on the photos pinched out: Another mother, her three children. There was a bunch of wedding photos. There was a child's toothbrush picked among the seaweed. A broken walking stick, a hand-sewn oar, and endless piles of baby clothes.

But I don't have them all, habibty. You see, each day roaming 'gypsies' and those 'ravens' – just nearby farmers that pick boats apart for anything of value – would come around for the day's catch. And every week, the volunteers or the municipality would scour the beaches removing the thousands of leftover lifejackets, along with truckfuls of plastic and tons of metal and wood from the broken boats. Then, every few months, giant pits would be dug at the new municipal dump and the mountains of coastline trash would be buried.

Out of sight, out of mind in periodic erasure. Along with them, the last traces of you, Somaya, and of your sons and daughters, and the rest of the obscure, faceless, nameless border-crossing people like you. You have all been gone by now, god knows where to, while others have copiously been arriving to take your place.

And I remember I had written something, long ago. Long before our lives ever crossed paths: At every threshold you lose something: You lose your shoe, your passport, part of your identity. Each border claims your given name, your certainties, your dignity, your only child, your mother's kiss upon your forehead, 10-20-90-180 days of

your life. Your life itself. But, if you can just hold on to that last one by any chance – that belittled, soaked to the bone and battered life of yours – then, once you’ve reached the other side, you will find out you have forever let go of all of your fears.

Yesterday I thought I needed all those things, Somaya. You did too. Today we are taught the bitter, blue-lipped way that we do not. Piece by piece our former lives are pulled away from our spine, yanked like chapters of a book we are reading on the run. All that will be left in the end is our own hazy version of what –maybe– took place between the lines.

The more I struggle to hold on to my worldview, onto my two birth-right-bestowed citizen eyes, my middle-class ears, to snuggle inside my barely-passing-for-‘western-white’ skin, to comply to my biometric burgundy passport, the more they slip away from me. The more they do, the more I let them do so.

‘Being someone new, never looking back’ Zarif told me one day three years ago. ‘Every border you cross, someone dies. Someone dies in you. And you create yourself from the beginning and you move on like that. You have to learn how to forget. I don’t even remember who that first person in me was any more... There have been many... And I don’t even know who the real one is now... Ah, let’s forget about this now, too, Joanna, shall we?’

Somaya, from all this, I only have the smuggled stories from the shore to prove it happened. Stuffed in my pockets, wrapped on my torso, deep in my stomach, swallowed. My mouth is numb, my love. My heart thumps raw and full in my chest. My lungs are burning. I want to speak, but how to explain to others what you taught me?

That cold feels like heat and death seems like sleep and that all this, all this is real. It’s not a movie. It is real. Behind the tempered glass screens that display your plight you’re real too: a human being awaiting permission to be and feel again so.

You pass me your child as you perch on the sides of that boat, you pass me your only bag, you give me your hand and I catch it. You step out. You tell me ‘Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you’.

The only word I hold onto from your language is ‘Sabr’. And that’s all I answer: ‘Sabr habibi’. Endure and be patient my friend.

Until we meet again.

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IV

TRASH/TRACES: LIVES ADRIFT ALONG THE BORDER

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To open the video 'Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border' on a mobile device use a QR Code reader to scan this image. Alternatively, you may follow this URL:
<https://jnp.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/default/article/view/118/115>

Abstract

This paper expands on the visual essay *'Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border'*, which narrates the author's experiences at the front-line of refugee rescue operations during the 2015 European 'refugee crisis' and explores the Aegean borderscape's affective geography by tracking the human and material traces of undocumented border-crossings on Lesbos island. Drawing on humanities' turn to affect and new materialism, and theoretical advancements in border studies this twofold project implements visual and (auto)ethnographic methods to indicate obscured dimensions of the contemporary European border regime and illustrate the affective and somatic impact of its politics upon a variety of actors. This is done through the visual and narrative chronicling of border crossing humans and materials, which are regarded and handled as trash to be promptly removed from public view, through their irregular trajectories' narration by the seawashed personal items. An archaeogeography of undocumented migration emerges through the tracing, conservation, and articulation of the flows of human and material 'waste' and their intersections and layerings across liminal landscapes, thereby instigating a rethinking of the affective, bodily and material economies of emplacement and mobility across the Aegean.

Introduction

The island of Lesbos has a long, yet obfuscated, history as a point of arrival for displaced and irregularly mobile populations (Papadopoulou, 2004; Karachristos, 2006; Hirschon, 2007), and was marked by the ongoing European refugee ‘crisis’, which redirected regional migratory pathways and the bulk of their material infrastructure through Lesbos, turning it into one of the 21st century’s greatest disaster sites (Papataxiarchis, 2016).

This paper comprises a supplementary textual companion to the video-essay ‘Trash/Traces: Lives adrift along the border’, which was conceived and completed shortly after the author’s return from volunteering as a lifeguard during the European refugee ‘crisis’ on Lesbos. The video and the paper draw on long-term ethnographic research on the Eastern Mediterranean borderscape using as primary material a photographic collection depicting bordercrossers’ sea-washed belongings found and captured by the author on Lesbos’ shores. The interweaving of a personal narrative with the photographed objects in the video, and their theoretical contextualization in this paper has a twofold aim: to illustrate less-considered aspects of the human/material/natural assemblages of forced migration and their affective encounters within the Aegean borderscape, and integrate them within the archaeology of contemporary undocumented migration framework (Hamilakis, 2016) from a geographical perspective.

Analytical framework

The lexical juxtaposition of ‘trash’ and ‘traces’ in the film’s title refers to the photographed objects, and to the people that owned them – both designated simultaneously as waste, and as traces of larger social processes. This parallel reference puts emphasis on waste material, on dirt and its residual marks, and on their significations and implications for marginalised individuals. ‘Dirt’, as Mary Douglas writes, is regarded as ‘matter out of place’ which ‘implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there

is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements' (Douglas, 1966, pp. 36–37).

Visual and discursive representations of migrants and refugees often strip them of their humanity and personhood (Bleiker *et al.*, 2013; Giannakopoulos, 2016; Chouliaraki and Stolic, 2017; Petersson and Kainz, 2017), reducing humans into peripheral beings, akin to animated objects caught in protracted sociospatial liminality (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1967) and systematically construed as matter out of place, on Lesvos and beyond. Similarly to household trash, bordercrossers are swiftly collected and removed from public view, and thereupon classified and contained within camps, which serve as 'a kind of omnibus compendium which includes all the rejected elements of ordered systems' (Douglas, 1966, p. 37) and function according to the migration- and refugee rescue industries' moral and financial economies (Givoni, 2011; Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2013).

The residual materiality of unauthorised border-crossings instigates environmental pollution doom-mongering (Skanavis and Kounani, 2016; Tyrikos-Ergas, 2016; Kounani and Skanavis, 2018) of comparable magnitude to the moral panics of sociocultural contamination incited by migration's recast sociality. Both are similarly resolved through forceful ordering: 'special waste' byproducts of refugee crossings (life jackets, rubber dinghies, and wooden- or fiberglass boats) undergo processes of profit-oriented sorting, in/visibilisation, repurposing, recommodification, or disposal (Tsoni, 2016, p. 43).

Although subtler and less voluminous than other 'refugee waste', bordercrossers' seawashed belongings are similarly treated as environmental pollutants, much like the humans they refer to. Ordinary objects found across Lesvos' northern shores were shed in/voluntarily, or even sacrificially – accidentally dropped, tossed to lighten the boat's load, or thrown as offerings to appease the hostile sea. Most may be functionally interchangeable (shoes, clothes, toiletries), yet

others have unique affective and spiritual dimensions: they are cherished family/personal mementoes and sacred amulets salvaged before fleeing and serving as identity referents in the midst of forced migration. Despite having little, if any, monetary value, they are invested with great symbolic and emotional value. They have distinct life periods and bear deep personal and cultural markers as they undergo successive transmutations: from ordinary things, to treasured keepsakes, to landfill-bound seaside trash, and recovered ephemeral traces of human passage.

Viewed from a new materialist perspective (Ingold, 2007, 2012; Coole and Frost, 2010; Witmore, 2014), although they all are man-made items, they are not inert matter but processual, relational and storytelling entities. They are ‘sensitive objects’ (Povrzanović Frykman, 2016, p. 90) with their own ‘object biography’ (Kopytoff, 1986; Joy, 2009), and possess ‘thing-power’ (Bennett, 2010, p. xvi) exceeding their ordinary status and manifesting traces of ‘lively’ agency. They are interconnected with global influences, individual subjectivities and surrounding environments. Through them the living, the lost and the ancestral are connected; the ‘where’ of ‘here’ and ‘there’ of homeland and exile are linked, while the ‘when’ of ‘now’ and ‘then’ is located, bridged and carried into the future.

From such a standpoint, borderscapes (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2007; Brambilla, 2015; Brambilla *et al.*, 2015) are fleshed out through the non-anthropocentric interaction of matters inside and outside human and material border-embodying bodies, and the physical and affective states that arise through- and, in turn, reciprocally influence the sociocultural and environmental conditions within which these bodies exist and function.

This work is an ‘archaeogeographic’ endeavour, which draws on affective geography (Navaro-Yashin, 2012) and responds to calls for advancing the archaeology of forced and undocumented migration (Hamilakis, 2016) and affect (Tarlow, 2012). These perspectives urge the valorisation and archiving of the material remnants of cross-border mobility experiences, particularly when such objects and their human referents are subjects of systematic erasure. They

historically contextualise how, not only humans, but also materials and places are imbued with affect and emotion, while also being involved in shaping and expressing them through processes of mutual affectation. An archaeogeography of undocumented migration on Lesbos, therefore, foregrounds both migrants and objects as protagonists and attends to the physical and metaphorical ‘excavation’ and preservation of the Aegean borderscape’s human/material ecology of traces, trajectories, livelihoods and affective ambiances fomented by forced migration in times of momentous historical significance.

Methodology and methods

Reflexive video ethnography has gained traction in human/geographic sciences (Margolis, 1994; Sandercock and Attili, 2010; Garrett, 2011; Voicu, 2013), and border/migration studies (Fox, 1995; Jacka and Petkovic, 1998; Biemann, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2009; Biemann and Sanders, 2003), as a medium that can capture affects’ circulation (Spinney, 2015), as well as document and represent research findings adequately, accurately and reflexively (White, 2009). The video-essay follows the ‘ethnographic fiction’ genre, using evocative visual and narrative storytelling of incidents that may not always correspond to actual events, but create truthful composite scenes and characters, and reveal understandings gleaned from previous qualitative research (Gray, 2004).

Inspired by the inscription of the female name ‘Somaya Zanardi’ inside a discarded lifejacket (Image 1) at Lighthouse beach on Lesbos (Figure 1), the narrative of a semi-fictional interaction between the author/videographer and Somaya is weaved. The two women may have never met in person, but their exchange is reminiscent of similar encounters and events witnessed by the author herself or narrated by other border-crossers. As such, this work explicitly draws on research data to express embodied truths and represent the absent ‘Other’ (Sparkes, 1997; Inckle, 2010), while remaining aware of the practical and moral problems of representation (Smith, 2002, p. 113). A lived ‘reality’ of- and at the European southeastern border is thus presented – a reality that is not invented, but rather emerges through the addition of characters and plot onto seemingly disconnected objects and witness accounts of actual events.

As Smith posits, 'ethnographic fiction and poetic representation are utilised as a possible way to evoke emotions; broaden audiences; illuminate the complexities of body-self relationships; include 'researcher', 'participant', and 'reader' in dialogue; help us think with stories; and ... invite the reader-as-witness to morally breathe and share a life within the storytelling relation' (Smith, 2002, p. 113). As such, this audiovisual narrative, raises the question of how we may relate to, represent, and research borders and the various bodies and objects populating their complex and ambiguous landscape.

One of its central aims is to 'open up' the unfamiliar spaces and encounters described by the researcher/rescuer and make them accessible to audiences of various backgrounds so they may immersively feel their way into them, beyond prevalent logocentric methods. As opposed to prior applications of this genre (Jupp, 2006, p. 319;

Figure 1: Map of Lesbos. Map by the author.

Petros *et al.*, 2016) this project includes, rather than removes, the researcher's perspective in an autoethnographic manner (Ellis, 2004; Davis and Ellis, 2007). By evoking the proximal senses (smell, hearing, taste, touch), viewers get sensorially and affectively attuned to otherwise overlooked elements of everyday life within the Aegean borderscape, as they are submerged a haunted, liquid atmosphere populated by objects and absent humans in a state of ruination.

Visual data collection and technical description of the video-essay.

The video-essay was directed, edited, written and narrated exclusively by the author. Seventy-three out of approximately 300 photographs of seawashed objects found at Lighthouse beach on the northern shores of Lesbos were selected, based on a range of technical and aesthetic criteria and their storytelling potential. They were captured with a smartphone camera over a one-month period in the winter of 2015-2016, during the author's participation in the refugee-boat search and rescue operations on the island as a volunteer lifeguard.

A uniform capturing angle and simple square framing emphasized each object individually, and no visual filters/effects were applied on the images or the video, preserving the natural colours and lighting. Items were photographed untampered on location, isolated from surrounding objects. The background (rocks, mud, seaweed and plants) thus turned into vital compositional and storytelling elements: far from being mere negative space outlines, they underlined and accentuated the powerful contradictions between the objects' intimacy, their owners' physical fragility and the environmental harshness afflicting both. The imagery was presented in a steady sequence of still photographs separated by minimal transition effects, and followed a stable, meditative pace regardless of the vocal narrative's rhythm and speed. Audio effects aimed to enhance immersion to border atmospherics and comprised of three distinct elements: looped recorded samples of waves on Lighthouse beach; the recorded author-recited narrative voice-over, and an edited version of a music piece by Heinali (2012).

Conclusion

Narrative- and content analysis of this project's audiovisual material indicates the severity of the somatic and affective impacts of the inhumane EU border regime upon refugees and other borderlanders, especially in the scaled space of islands (Bueno Lacy and van Houtum, 2013; Loyd and Mountz, 2014). The magnitude of human suffering and loss due to borders' necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003; Williams, 2015; Davies, 2017) is also revealed – a loss ranging from material objects, to personal memories, identity, time, or life itself. Along with them, the scale of solidarity and resilience is also brought to light, despite the physical and emotional traumas inflicted upon border-crossers and those who rescue or receive them (Sifaki-Pistolla *et al.*, 2017).

The stranded everyday objects, along with the rescuer's narrativized experience prompt the consideration of embodied and material dimensions of everyday life in forced mobility, and evoke a range of emotions and affects commonly associated with 'refugee' lives (uncertainty, fragility, fear), as well as less-anticipated ones, such as tenacity, hope, faithfulness, coquetry, gratitude, unwinding, and routinized day-to-day continuity of life despite setbacks and adversity. Objects also act as mirrors: their familiarity and privateness evoke overlooked similarities between 'regular' and 'irregular' lives and reiterate that 'Others' are not all that different from 'us' after all, despite the persistent physical and psychological shunning of refugees from society.

Affective borderscapes, such as the one partially traced by this project, emerge as fluidly demarcated interstitial spaces, where the paths and pathos of a transitory assemblage of human and non-human bodies intersect and interact. Feelings, instincts, presumptions, memories, actions, perceptions, sensations, material relations, mobilities and intangible forces circulate and come together. They surge, subside and bleed into each other, evoking dynamic atmospheres that surround, situate and steer the bodies emplaced within them, while they construct, enact or contest the 'top-down' effects and affects of bordering from below.

The predicament of these processes and encounters cannot be foretold, much like the outcome of the narrator's and Somaya's engagement. The word 'sabr' (Arabic: صَبْرٌ), one of Islam's foundational virtues – suggesting forbearance, perseverance and patience in the face of hardship – is exchanged as an almost tangible token of consolation and moral support: a lifeline on which both the narrator and Somaya need to hold on to, to sustain themselves. Their farewell, 'until we meet again', leaves a window for some unknown, re-constituted future, someplace else, another time.

This archaeogeographic approach of the human/material encounters of undocumented migration is attuned to the borderscape's 'wasted' materialities, socialities, and temporalities and tries to capture and contextualise their affective resonances in space and time through reflexive ethnographic methods. Current bordering processes and effects are thus traced, and the question of devising new approaches that would challenge prevalent border imaginaries and their inherent classification/rejection logics through the impassioned/affective engagement and mobilisation of various audiences is opened. This affectively-generated reconceptualization of borders 'from below' can potentially impact the actual and metaphorical trajectories of refugees' arrested lifepaths at the margins of Europe, even if incrementally.

Selected video-essay stills

Image 1: The film's opening image. An adult-sized lifejacket with the handwritten name 'Somaya Zanardi'. Next to it lies child-sized lifejacket and a small pair of shoes in a plastic bag.

Image 2: A baby bottle wrapped in a plastic bag and a rusted metal chewing gum tin. [08:45].

Image 3: Broken watch dial stopped at 09:30'23" [02:16].

Image 4: The first of six handwritten pages describing in detail the preparation of several traditional Syrian desserts [01:54]

Image 5: Two toothbrushes inside a plastic bag [04:21].

Image 6: Iron, folic acid and zinc capsules (commonly prescribed during pregnancy) in blister packaging, from Ibn-Alhaytham Pharmaceutical Industries in Aleppo, Syria [03:17]. Other medicine found were Naxiprazol 20mg capsules (for gastric disorders), Ponistan 500mg tablets (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug), Entero-Stop pills (intestinal tract antibiotic), Faderin 100mg tablets (cardiovascular system drug), Tribion Forte 1000 (multivitamin), and many other unidentifiable drugs.

Image 7: Child-sized inflatable swim ring with cartoon decorations [03:39].

Image 8: Complimentary notepad from the five-star hotel Cham Palace in Damascus, Syria [05:34].

Image 9: A pack of menstrual pads wrapped in a plastic bag with four pieces of headscarf-securing pins attached to it [07:10].

Image 10: Laminated booklet containing a selection of surahs from the Qur'an [02:31].

Image 11: Complementary hotel shampoo bottle from the four-star hotel Best Western Konak in Izmir [09:02]

Image 12: A tube of 'instant full volume' mascara from the Turkish brand Golden Rose [08:29]. Other make up products found included lip gloss, lipstick, eyelash curlers, and eyeliner pens among others.

Image 13: A black trash bag full of Alhamraa long cigarettes from Aleppo, Syria – one of the most popular brands among Syrian smokers [04:15].

Image 14: Customised Saint Christopher amulet: After its original buckle was broken, the pendant was drilled through again and a new link was inserted. [09:16].

Image 15: The inscription on the back side of the amulet: ‘St. Christopher / patron of travellers / pray for us / protect us / in our travels’ [09:23].

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V

Parsing the Aegean affective borderscape

*Ioanna Wagner Tsoni**

Abstract

The land- and sea-scape stretching across the Greek-Turkish borders in the Aegean Sea had diachronically been a space where cultures, authorities and mobilities have interlocked and reciprocally reshaped. The advent of the European crisis of refugee reception and asylum since 2015, however, has turned the southeastern Mediterranean into a securitized zone lacerated by disquiet and death, irreversibly affecting the local topography and recasting the sociality and mobility of permanent and itinerant communities in the region. Seeking to contribute to the theoretical and analytical understanding of borders and their effects on the sociospatial landscapes they cut across, this essay offers a narrative analysis of the Aegean borderscape. This is done through the detailed parsing of a photograph depicting an inconspicuous moment of bordering, supplemented with the author's own experiences at the frontline of refugee rescue operations in Lesvos. The unravelling of the manifold storylines interlocked within the still image that is the focal point of this essay reveals the borderscape's materialities, its local and historical specificities, its affective intensities and the uneven power dynamics at play between a variety of actors encountering each other at the border.

Keywords

Borderscape, borders, Aegean Sea, Lesvos, affect, refugee 'crisis'

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This paper unfolds around the borders that stretch along the southeastern margins of Europe and the ways the interplay of various human and non-human actors within this landscape initiates a dynamic process of construction, enaction and contestation of borders from below. This is the region I was born and raised in, and which I prided myself on knowing deeply and on having researched extensively. The essence of the overlapping histories, peoples, materialities and authorities this landscape comprised of remained elusive, however, even when this study was well underway. It wasn't only my words that failed to capture and communicate the fleeting dimensions of borders that I was after: their depth and complexity, their temporality, the intensity of their embedded affects and their spill-over effects, their indeterminacy. Visual representations – photographs, illustrations, infographics – also proved insufficient in spite of the media's inundation of sensationalized refugee imagery since the 2015 refugee 'crisis'.

And yet, there was this dialogue, which had been ingrained in my mind since I first encountered it in writing:

- Would you like to photograph borders?
- You mean things that are invisible?
- Yes.

This short exchange between Sarah Green and the photographer Lena Malm in the opening lines of the book *'Borderwork: A visual journey through periphery frontier regions'* (2013) has been guiding my pursuit of how to portray borders despite their persistent undepictability through images or words.

Two years later, in September of 2015, a similar conversation took place between Anna Pantelia, a photojournalist friend with whom I had collaborated in the past (Tsoni and Pantelia, 2014) reporting on the lives and journeys of migrants in Greece, and myself. Anna had just returned to Athens from Lesbos, where she had been documenting the gathering momentum of the refugee 'crisis'. I was in Malmö preparing a talk on the Aegean borderscape, having just returned from Greece after yet another round of ethnographic fieldwork on undocumented border crossings in Athens (where I was born and raised) and Lesbos, which is a place I have come to know intimately over a long period of time and through many visits, both research-related and not. As such, I have been a first-hand witness of the radical transformation that the picturesque Aegean island has undergone: from a quaint and quiet place, where life and leisure unfolded slowly from day to day for locals and holiday-makers alike; to the first disquieting signs of refugee boats' nightly arrivals picking up more than a decade ago, met mostly with disregard or disaffection both by the authorities and the public; to the eventual toxic combination of the extensive regional turmoil with the inter/national authorities' lasting indifference and unpreparedness, which culminated dramatically into the humanitarian disaster of 2015-2016, dubbed as 'the European refugee crisis', which has been persistently unfolding across the Aegean islands despite the subsiding of media attention, ever since.

Back in that morning of September 2015, however, I was exasperated by days of unsuccessful online search for imagery that could vividly evoke the border's atmosphere to my upcoming presentation's audience. I had been looking for a picture that would convey something of the sensory richness, the material composition, the human inhabitation, as well as the legal and geographical intricacy of the floating borderline along the narrow stretch of sea between Turkey

and Greece. Online search had yielded no results: the vast majority of images coming up with any combination of the terms ‘Greece’, ‘borders’, ‘migration’, ‘refugees’ and ‘Lesvos’ depicted moments of chaos and turmoil framed within a crisis context and were filled with archetypal depictions of ‘refugeeness’. Cameras zoomed in, almost in a predatory manner, on unsuspecting, unconsenting individuals in distress. Through their narrow lenses exaggerated instances of human suffering and abjection were captured in overwhelming detail to please editors and feed the news cycle. Border-crossers were reduced into mass-replicated figures of ‘the refugee’: beings rendered as either indistinguishable parts of the ‘swarms’ that had been ‘invading’ Europe, or as ‘wretched’ existences in need of help – as either enemies, or victims. Their suffering was then broadcast in high-res globally, pushing subtler nuances and narratives of the border out of the frame, displacing peripheral presences and sidelining subdued sensibilities and senses. Such portrayals gradually desensitised audiences and confined the viewers’ perception within the images’ preset communicative architecture. Although seemingly everything laid in plain sight some of the foundational elements that made and mobilised the border apparatus were un/intentionally concealed: other actors and their practices, policies, imaginations and discourses on borders and human security remained obfuscated.¹

What I sought that September afternoon, however, was a piece of the bigger picture. I looked not just for presences, but for withdrawals as well, as well as co-presences or selective withdrawals of the Aegean borderscape’s affordances. I searched for imprints of the social, spatial, material and temporal intensities I had witnessed under many capacities around borders myself – as a casual onlooker, a concerned citizen, an academic researcher, a human-rights activist, a volunteer lifeguard rescuer at times – but which I had not yet been able to visually depict in any imagery I had captured myself, neither had I discovered in the photography of others. I was seeking one of those ‘mundane’ and ‘uneventful’ scenes of bordering, of which I had experienced plenty myself, in which, however, the traces of what may have evaded the camera’s split-second **click**, but still remained palpable long after escaping capture, and the universe of their ambivalent outcomes, were still resonant and pulsating.

“I know I’m probably not making it any easier for you now,” I told Anna, after giving her a shorter and more colloquial introduction of what I was after. She would take a look at her most recent material and get back to me, she said. A few minutes later she would text me back: “You mean something like this?” dropping a file for me to download.

¹ For examples of such depictions of refugees during the 2015 ‘crisis’ see the second slideshow featured in Rothman and Ronk (2015) in the online edition of *Time* magazine.

Image 1: Sunrise over the Aegean borderscape. Image: © Anna Pantelia

It wasn't something *like* this I was after. It was *exactly* this. Opening the image file, I immediately recognised a location that I had come to know well and had encountered under different circumstances during the last years, which made its deciphering from the multiple perspectives that I embodied easier. Yet, in that moment it appeared eerily unfamiliar. Suddenly I felt disoriented and tried to re(c)enter and position myself within the landscape it presented, as well as outside it.

The complex tensions and intersections taking place within border areas are particularly hard to depict visually and, as touched upon earlier, their prevalent mediatized representations often run the risk of obscuring as many of their elements as they reveal. Having experienced the frustration of 'being unable, despite my best efforts, to source – or to capture myself – representative imagery on borderscapes' composition, Anna's photograph emerged as the most illustrative and evocative visual example of what borderscapes, in my opinion, are: Liminal, overlapping landscapes that function as contact zones and charged fields of interaction between the shifting configurations of relationally-positioned animate and inanimate actors, and the forces, materialities, logics and imaginaries that permeate those spaces, resulting in the co-affectation of all elements involved.

In the following paragraphs I will proceed to justify this syllogism, as I will walk the reader through the diachronic spatial, social, material, cultural, historical and legal aspects of the Aegean border space that this seemingly ‘uneventful’ image pulls together and grounds within the contemporary context of the compounded ‘crises’ unfolding at the European periphery. This will be attempted from the perspective of someone who grew up on the southeastern shores of the Mediterranean and developed a keen interest in the overlapping dislocations and the successive mobilities and layerings of populations and cultures in the extended region. This curiosity fomented into something bigger than just an enduring academic interest: it has developed into a deeply-held affinity with the patterns of these phenomena in the distant past, and a preoccupation with their present- and its possible future configurations. This paper is the outcome of the enduring peregrination of someone who has grappled with borders, both internal and external, throughout her life; someone who has pursued being profoundly moved and constantly moving across spaces where borders erupt and coalesce in search of elusive traces of their history, which is lived and written from below as much as it is from above.

The image’s interpretation remains elusive, however, as most of its striking features may not be immediately noticeable for the unfamiliar, or unsuspecting eye. The answers of people to whom I had shown this picture, asking them ‘what do you see here?’ without providing any further context or introduction, missed the point and were totally unrelated. Some saw a romantic sunrise at an idyllic location. A little cropping around the photograph’s lower side could easily transform it into a tourism-promoting campaign for a few or make it a perfect destination-wedding photoshoot setting for others. In someone else’s, more ecologically-conscious perspective, the amount of plastic trash floating on the sea indicated the alarming levels of sea pollution and warned against environmental degradation.

Among the unsuspecting acquaintances that have been asked about what they see in this image since then, some have even mentioned ‘drifting water lilies’, or ‘floating lanterns on a lake’. Others described ‘flower-wreaths thrown in the water’, ‘stepping stones’, or ‘early morning swimmers that have tossed their clothes in the water while wading in’. Some daydreamed of the view from their dream balcony. As first impressions misled everyone, picking some of the image’s constitutive elements apart and offering readers an in-depth directed viewing becomes essential to providing an entry point to the elusive Aegean borderscape.

No one among those questioned had noticed the black specks dotting the far back of the horizon. None could name the mountain range in the distance, nor where in the world those waters were located. Nobody problematized how far from the nearest shore this scene unfolded, or what conditions enabled its capturing in broad daylight. The potentiality and actuality of the Aegean borderscape remained latent and elusive in this still image, just as it did within the physical landscape it emerged from, concealed even from the photographer’s eye and her lens.

The borderscape perspective foregrounded in this paper is based on a relational, processual and dialogic understanding of borders as mobile spaces that extend beyond the imaginary of the line and consist of performative, participatory and senseable dimensions of bordering processes (Perera, 2007; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2007; Brambilla, 2015; Brambilla et al., 2015). To convey the borderscape’s modular composition and make the forces and affects at play within this space visible it is necessary to indicate, and relationally position its constitutive elements.

Some are clearly noticeable, even if misinterpreted, while others remain concealed, although in plain sight. At the same time, while contextualising the content of such a setting and putting it into perspective, it is crucial to remain attentive and account not only for what is readily present but for what might appear as absent, too.

Content analysis and compositional interpretation of this image could help uncover the selectively- or less visible, or the downright invisible aspects of life and vitality at- and of the Aegean borders. That, in turn, can open up inquiries on the borders' construction, enaction and contestation from below, and the generation of affect not just intersubjectively but also out of environmental and material interactions, to be then often utilised and (re)produced for political expediency. In this direction, a spatialised understanding of affect is proposed (Reeves, 2011; Navaro-Yashin, 2012; Laszczkowski and Reeves, 2015). In this view, affect is not reducible to feelings or emotions (Massumi, 1995) – as affects are 'not simply emotion' (Thrift, 2008, p. 116) and they 'are not feelings', either (Deleuze, 1995) – they are states of body and mind, which from a Spinozan perspective act as circulating forces and forms of encounter within and between bodies that have the capacity to both affect and be affected, whose impact extends beyond –yet does not preclude– subjectivity. As such, a spatialized understanding affect embraces the changeable and complex relations between the entire configuration of motion, emotion, intellect, materiality, landscape and the spectral, as well as the potential of individuals to both be affected and to affect their social and spatial environments.

It appears rather counter-intuitive to initiate an inquiry into something as fundamentally nonvisual and visceral as the affective composition of borderscapes with the dissection of an image. A closer reading of the initial image as it appears in the field-diary sketch that follows can be helpful, however. Stripped of the photograph's evocative atmosphere, this sketch focusses on the bare essentials, offering only the outlines of its constitutive shapes, and handing viewers the red thread that will help unravel this landscape.

Despite everything within this image appearing serene, this is a borderscape deployed in full action. Firstly, a need to attend to space and spatiality emerges: Where was this picture taken? This landscape unfolds just off Lesbos island, right along the eastern maritime borders of Greece with Turkey, somewhere on the long continuous beach extending across the island's southeastern shoreline. The photo was taken in a space of paradoxically intersecting mobilities: near the island's airport, which lies on its easternmost coastline, just off its capital city, Mytilene. It is one of the many locations along Lesbos' southern coast where migrants departing from Turkey in their flimsy escape-boats would land on, only a two-lane street and a short barbed-wire topped fence away from the landing strips and airplanes bringing in holiday-makers all year round.

Although seemingly lacklustre and rather plain, this is a space of unpredictability and charged contingencies. It is a landscape rife with the violence of demarcation lines that have been drawn and redrawn in the course of centuries, affecting the lives of millions. Lines which have nowadays been reanimated and, like in their not-so-distant past, are being tenaciously – and at the same time routinely – trespassed, inhabited and guarded.

For the moment, however, the only evident line we notice is that of the horizon, indicated on the sketch as (1). The Greek noun 'orizōn' (Gr: *ὀρίζων* = a separating circle that encloses a series of

units), from which the English word horizon originates, derives from the verb ‘orizo’ (Gr: *ὀρίζω*), which means ‘to order’, ‘to define’, ‘to control’, and which in turn stems from the root word ‘óros’ (Gr: *ὄρος* = *boundary, landmark*). The Greek word for border ‘*sýnoro*’ (Gr: *σύνορο*) derives from the compound verb ‘synorizo’ (Gr: *συνορίζω*). Synorizo stems from the same root word as horizon does (*ὄρος*) and the prefix syn (Gr: *συν* = *with*), which underlines the synergetic formation of a borderline, giving the verb the following meanings: *bring together, give one’s consent to a boundary*.

In the absence of the sociality and consensus attributed by ‘syn’ in the delimitation of the boundary, however, it is the horizon that takes on the natural ordering and bordering of space unilaterally and non-negotiably, as opposed to the common agreement implied by the border-as-*sýnoro*, which postulates a joint agreement over b/orders. This is the first of many subsequent orderings that will be taking place in this space and is of primary importance: what, and who, exists past the horizon in the unknown otherness beyond the contours of its ‘separating enclosure of related units’, and what lies right here, close to our hearth and heart and all that is perceived as ‘ours’². The image’s spatiality also draws in its temporality. What we now witness, was quite different in the past. What lies beyond the horizon while gazing out from the Greek shores – the distant hazy mountain range of Madra (2), solid and symbolic barriers at once, in what is now Turkey – would also be considered ‘ours’ (if you were Greek) less than 90 years ago, before the so-called ‘Asia Minor Catastrophe’ (*Mikrasiatiki Katastrophi*) of 1923 swept across the Aegean coast of Turkey.

This historical disaster was the final result of the dissolution of the Ottoman empire and the eruption of the Greco-Turkish wars, followed by the sweeping advancement of the Turkish army onto areas occupied by large numbers of Greek-speaking, Christian Orthodox populations after a catastrophically unsuccessful irredentist military expedition (Tsolainos, 1923) of the Greek army to ‘redeem’ the Anatolian territories, led by the so called concept of *Megali Idea*, or ‘Great Idea’³ (James, 2008, p. 3; Bechev and Nikolaidis, 2010, p. 80). When those lands came under Turkish rule, more than 1.5 million Greeks were uprooted and forcefully displaced, as were other minorities, either fleeing the atrocities that ensued, or through the subsequent compulsory population exchange between Turkey and Greece (Hirschon, 2003; Özsü, 2011). These events and their aftermath are some of the most traumatic landmarks of Greek historical memory (Hirschon, 2004), their reverberations echoing deeply in collective representations and constructions of national identity until today.

² For definitions and etymology of Greek words see the Greek English Lexicon by Liddel et al. (1996) or the links to its online version by the University of California, Irvine at <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lslj/>:

óros: Liddel et al. (1996, pp. 1255–1266); or TLJ (2011c)

orizo: Liddel et al. (pp. 1250–1251); or TLJ (2011a)

orizon: Liddel et al. (p. 1251); or TLJ (2011b)

syn: Liddel et al. (p. 1690); or TLJ (2011d)

synorizo: Liddel et al. (pp. 1723); or TLJ (2011a)

³ This expansionist national myth of nineteenth-century Hellenism, fueled by narratives of former national glory, victimhood and resistance, envisioned gaining access to the Anatolian heartland of the Byzantine Empire and to recapture its capital city, Constantinople/Istanbul, transforming the then nascent Greek state into a hegemonic power.

Image 2: Fieldnote sketch of Image 1. Drawing by the author (2015).

Yet, “all facts ... in world history occur, as it were, twice... the first time as a tragedy, the second as farce” as Marx’s (1972, p. 10) oft-quoted maxim goes: Asia Minor Greeks (*Mikrasiates*) had desperately sought refuge on the Greek islands and onto the mainland in the same way that refugees of other backgrounds do today. They were departing in panic and with only what they could carry in their hands, if anything, on unseaworthy fishing boats and rafts from the very same towns: Izmir and Ayvalik, under the aloof gaze of the Great Powers’ navy forces as Turkish troops under the command of Mustafa Kemal pillaged and slaughtered behind them (Neyzi, 2008). Sadly, Greek refugees of the time were received in a climate of similar repudiation and hostility as today’s displaced populations are: unaided, marginalised, scorned and turned away by Greek townsfolk and authorities⁴.

Somewhere along the narrow waters between Greece and Turkey in this image lies today’s liquid border (3). This border, however, has been mobile in itself. It is a line that has been drawn and redrawn through centuries of strained relations between the two liminally-positioned countries (Rumelili, 2003). It is a heavily patrolled border that both countries’ air and navy forces provocatively violate on a daily basis, and where multiple layers of national and inter/supra/national authorities and interlocking sovereignties coalesce – Greek, Turkish, EU, FRONTEX, NATO among others – wage biopolitical wars against migrants (Voutira, 2013; Garelli and Tazzioli, 2018).

⁴ For a general overview of the events around the ‘Asia Minor Catastrophe’ of 1922 and the long term difficulties experienced by the displaced peoples themselves see the work of Rene Hirschon (1998, 2004, 2009), and Giannuli (1995).

It is a border that has been exhaustively regulated through copious volumes of national and international law, its sociospatial particularities producing their own range of unheard-of legal terminologies which are literally unpracticeable elsewhere in the world⁵, in an effort to bring eventual compromise between the two irreconcilable neighbours. It is a border that has been crossed in different historical times, towards different directions, by different populations with the same, or similar, urgencies. Greeks that fled the Nazi occupation during World War II left from the Aegean islands towards the Turkish shores even on makeshift rafts, or clinging onto floating barrels, to find safety in the refugee camps of Middle East: at Moses-Wells in Egypt, Aleppo in Syria and Nuseirat in Palestine among other locations⁶. This is a border which has connected, as much as it has divided, the peoples and cultures that have lived around it throughout millennia, as the Aegean islands have featured as century-old sites of arrival, co-existence and resistance for the forcibly displaced (Giannuli, 1995; Tsimouris, 2001; Hirschon, 2007; Myrivili, 2009). And yet, it is not only people that cross the border. Like elsewhere in the world, it is the border that crosses people, too – from the US-Mexico border to the Thai-Burma one and beyond (Burke, 2002; Lamb, 2014), mixing their pasts and futures, their ancestries, histories and cultures.

The objects that lie scattered in the foreground start hinting at an entry point to the scene. Those shapeless heaps and bobbing bits that seem like garbage at first, were treasured lifesavers just minutes earlier. They are not just plastic flotsam and jetsam: according to the gaze that is cast upon them they are peace symbols, deathtraps, tokens of solidarity to migrants and refugees, reminders of an ‘ominous invasion’, orange representations of hope and despair, universal symbols of the voyage of refugees (Tyrikos-Ergas, 2016). What we see are lifejackets (6), inflatable lifebuoys and even inner car-tire tubes (5). They are children’s swimming armbands – way too many of them – and child-sized life vests for poolside play (7). Those had been people’s lifelines during their perilous crossing and were now discarded and drifting with the current. Each one of them a person. Missing.

The bodies around which those knock-off, non-buoyant orange life jackets with the intentionally misspelled logos were tightly fastened are nowhere to be found. The absence of the material objects’ humans is palpable, eerie and disquieting. Even though they are missing, however, a residual sensation lingers, which keeps them persistently interfolded with the other human and non/more-than-human bodies that constitute the social, material, spectral, administrative, technological and legal aspects of this borderscape.

Spatiality once more becomes inescapable, this time on a micro scale: “How far from the beach can we possibly be as we witness this scene? Has their boat capsized? Are they alive or dead as we speak? Are their bodies below the water or have they gotten off safely on a shore?” Temporality kicks in, too, as the mind strives for an explanation, a reassurance: “What happened right before the moment we are witnessing?”, “What is happening to them right now that we cannot witness”, “What will happen to those absent bodies soon after?”

⁵ For an overview of the outstanding maritime boundary issues and specialised terminology attempting to bring a resolution between Greece and Turkey see Van Dyke (1996), Sultan (2001), Acer (2003), and Vassalotti (2011).

⁶ For the reverse movement of Greek refugees during the Second World War see Abou Mrad (2016), Taparata and Kuang (2016), Tharoor (2016).

The viewers' affect intensifies and sharpens, as they break through another perspective playing out in parallel over the serene Aegean waters: would one trust their lives to a flimsy contraption that costs less than 5 euros in the back streets of Izmir? What would be the cost of ensuring the life and safety of one's own children? Would they set them afloat on unknown high seas, their small arms pushed through yellow floaties with happy octopus cartoons painted on them, while the label's fine print warned: "Will not protect against drowning. Use only under adult supervision. Not for use in boating. This is not a lifesaving device. Do not leave child unattended while device is in use"⁷. If we would choose not to, then what would that tell about the presumed value of the lives of others, and their ranking against ours, when forced to take perilous paths to safety? And what would their predicament teach us about the nature and of our privilege and the conditions of its permanence?

At this point it might seem as if this has been all this picture depicts. Upon closer observation, however, a few black specks can be discerned across the horizon. In the middle, like a smudge towards the left, a Hellenic Coastguard ship on patrol – easy to tell from its characteristically-poised outline (8). Like a small ripple to the right, a refugee dinghy that has crossed the borderline and is slowly approaching Lesvos slogging through the waters, laying low as it faces the shapely composure of the coastguard boat (9). Far off to the right, factoring in the size which distance understates, a large commercial or passenger ship, or maybe a yacht, gliding unproblematically across a designated, well-governed and regulated route (10). Although almost entirely confident about the accuracy of these details, absolute certainty regarding the vessels' typology and logistics is impossible, even after examining them up close in the high-resolution version of the image. The analysis that follows is, therefore, based on informed guesses based on first-hand knowledge and collected material obtained through my extended ethnographic fieldwork in the area. To recreate the borderscape's atmosphere as witnessed by its many actors, including the researcher herself, and shape the contours of its landscape and affective charge, a certain degree of poetic license has also been employed, to help interweave the diverse pieces of information into a coherent, composite narrative.

The coastguard boat's presence in this image stands both as an apparatus and an apparition of the state: a fiduciary of its sovereignty, an implementer of its political will, and an enactor of its monopoly of violence within its (maritime) territory. It is a human/material assemblage in possession of special authority and executive power that has the power to act, often arbitrarily, on its behalf. Transposing the example of the state-embodying police helicopter offered by Laszczkowski and Reeves (2015) onto the Hellenic Coastguard vessel:

[...] it embodies many of the attributes of the state as depicted in recent anthropological writing [...] It is abstract and remote, yet simultaneously tangible and concrete. It is empowered through technology, yet seemingly possessed of an autonomous organicity, able to affect its subjects in ways at once denigrating and elevating. It is capable of prodigal displays of violence. It is inimical, awe inspiring, and irresistible. It overpowers the senses and turns human lives on the ground into a confusing, insubstantial tangle dependent on the state's force for sense and substance. (ibid., pp. 1–2)

⁷ Actual warning label inside children's lifejackets found across Lesvos.

In the words of a Hellenic Coastguard captain, who was interviewed informally in Lesvos and wished to remain anonymous, when asked about the chain of command and decision-making process upon the sighting of an unauthorized boat during a night patrol: “[...] what law? In the dark of night, in the middle of the sea I am the law” (Anonymous Hellenic Coastguard Captain, personal communication, July 10, 2013). With this matter-of-fact statement, the Captain admitted the *de facto* fusion and personification of the (supposedly discrete) executive, legislative and judicial powers of the state during a critical incident, while also succinctly verifying Radcliffe-Brown’s contention that the idea of an overarching, abstract Leviathan State as something that exists over and above the human individuals that comprise its society and political organisation is merely a fiction. What does exist, instead, is a collection of individual human beings connected by a complex system of relations, possessing different roles, powers and authorities that converge around the control and regulation of the use of physical force (1950, p. xxiii).

Both the coastguard vessel and the distant commercial ship are navigated by trained, experienced captains, and have their high-tech telecommunication, navigational, and safety systems in place. The latter one carries *bona fide*⁸ travellers; the citizens of enduring states, in possession of passports in the ‘right’ colours, with the right stamps on the right pages granting them legal passage. Refugee dinghies, which have already started deflating, or their knock-off ‘Made in China’ engines have started taking in seawater halfway across the barely 8 nautical miles separating Lesvos from the Turkish shores, are customarily steered by one of their prospective passengers, instead. As migrants and refugees who have arrived to Europe in these flimsy inflatable boats have attested to me in the numerous border-crossing narratives I have collected through the years, it is usually when the whole group of border-crossers has been assembled at the departure point on a Turkish beach that a guy gets randomly picked to steer the boat by the smugglers – often at gunpoint if they are unwilling or they resist. Other times, someone might volunteer himself on the spot, bargaining for a better price. Their training does not exceed roughly five minutes of barking orders (fuel is limited and too precious to waste on perfecting boating skills), while being demonstrated the most basic of a motorboat engine’s functions: how to crank it on again if it dies, how to accelerate and turn. That random guy is then left responsible for a boatful of strangers’ lives, who are often told they are going to cross a river – not the open sea, and who are given no other option but to step aboard and trust him to bring them ashore.

The travellers, state agents and commercial products on board of authorised vessels are standing in stark contrast to the dinghy passengers who are struggling to reach the shore. The first ones are the beneficiaries of an all-enabling assemblage of governance, technology and law apparatuses, which dictate who is deemed worthy of saving in case of an emergency and who is to let die under the EU’s unofficial maritime version of the Prevention Through Deterrence doctrine (De León, 2015, pp. 23–37). Those privileged passenger bodies and cargo are classed as the rightful receivers of proclamations regarding the ‘free movement of people, goods and services’, while the deployment of search and rescue operations is imperative in case of distress.

On their antipode lie those ‘other’ bodies, whose illegitimate passage and presence within such border landscapes spark the borderscape into motion and illuminate the political and legal

⁸ Ablative case of Latin phrase ‘bona fides’, meaning ‘in good faith’, often used as an adjective to signify ‘legitimate’.

paradox of our times, wherein access to justice and universal human rights, such as the right to seek and enjoy asylum, remain only black letter law (Lendaro, 2016; Terlouw, 2017). Contrary to the case of *bona fide* travellers, the prevention of refugee deaths at sea – an indiscriminate obligation under international maritime law – has become a discretionary option for states, and individuals who infringe it have been addressed with increasing punitiveness, in European coastal waters and beyond (Heller and Pezzani, 2016; Watson, 2016; Fekete, 2018; Ghezelbash *et al.*, 2018).

Among the numerous other compounded injustices afflicting different populations all across today's world, migrants' and asylum seekers' inclusion and exclusion from arrival societies and their structures – including their access to justice, and even their very ability to safely reach and remain within the spaces where these presumably universal rights could be claimed – is not just yet another issue. Within the European/EU context this is a very topical question, which remains in urgent and persistent need of being addressed, lest the ruptures that have started appearing across its social and political architecture should keep rifting ever wider apart. This question gets usually oversimplified by its framing as a 'migration/refugee crisis', yet as it has been argued before (Heller and Pezzani, 2016), it is a structural crisis that reaches far deeper, into the EU's changing political and economic geography, and has been preceded (and is likely to be followed) by a range of other 'crises' and polarizations. To understand, and perhaps amend or reverse, the logics and forces that drive this process it is, in my view, vital to pay attention to the specific bordering practices implemented in a routinised and unremarkable manner at the continent's peripheries: The tremendous loss of human lives on the way to- and at Europe's doorstep, or their wasting away under subhuman conditions in peripheralized/externalised migrant camps; the politically strategic normalization of basic affects in relation to migrants and border crossing – such as fear, compassion, anger, distress, contempt and humiliation, among others – for ideological and political expediency; the widening contradiction between what the formal laws and proclaimed value systems of supra/national authorities prescribe on the one hand, and a reality that is far grimmer when encountered by people on the ground – or in the middle of the open sea – on the other.

The legal, political and technological networks that are intertwined and firmly emplaced within this space move not only outwards, but also inwards, embedding themselves into bodies that then become polarized and coded with- and as symbols of otherness to be systematically decoded thereafter (Synnott, 1993; Hamilakis, Pluciennik and Tarlow, 2002). The workings of borders might appear deceptively abstract. However, as this image illustrates, their filtering mechanisms determine a priori the distance and proximity allowed between different bodies, and between them and their surrounding: who to let through, who to detain, and who to expel, how, when and why.

"Borders portend to offer comfort and safety through simultaneously producing violation. And borders are never what they seem" as Zalewski (2013, p. 134) argues. This dormant dipole of tranquillity and terror that borders conjure, and which animates this scene, is rife with the presence (or absence) and the action (or inertia) of a multitude of actors: human and material assemblages who dwell in or defend the landscape whose demarcation lines irregular migrants defy. They are brought together, or are pulled apart by different necessities and forces, and their affective interactions stir up the borderscape. This border materiality pertains to the entire

configuration of politics, law, administration and technology that underpin its ground operations from a distance – not merely the rickety boats, razor wire fences and orange life vests; neither the courtrooms, press conferences, refugee memorials, nor the flags, passports, checkpoints, walls, drones and motion sensors that conclude this top-down effected borderwork on the ground. All those ‘things’ come together in a mesh of socio-spatial relations, representations and practices, which produce spatialities with specific material and lived dimensions, mental conceptualisations and specific social and political effects.

Returning to the image that set off this reflection, it is important to pay attention not just to the previously delineated historical temporality, which is tightly enfolded within it, but to the proximate facets of time, too. The hour of the day this scene occurs is in itself significant: it is early morning, as we are standing on the shores of Lesbos facing towards the east we see the sun barely risen ⁴) and we are observing a succession of unauthorized border crossings in full development (one concluded and one underway), while national authorities stand by and observe. This is a cluster of events that has moved from its habitual chronotopic frame of occurrence (the dark of night) into plain daylight. What thresholds of need, hope, or desperation had been reached by the prospective border-crossers to overcome the fear and trepidation that characterized crossings not so long ago, and what political processes and decisions have made this temporal and attitudinal shift towards border-crossing possible, or necessary?

As with every visual representation, the cover image can only suggest just few of the borderscape’s qualities among those visible to the eye. It is the aspects that refer to the layout, colour, texture, form, volume, size, pattern and inhabitation of the landscape that can be directly communicated here, at best. The sensory richness of this environment remains elusive. Vision lingers restricted in the compartmentalised area of the frame, while the remaining senses – taste, smell, sound and touch – and all their resulting emotions are wiped out. If you have ever been on the receiving end of border’s full affect, however, those lingering sensations may drag you back to it, in the most unsuspecting of moments. These are the only devices which can help open it up and make it accessible for others, too. Having been there myself, on the frontline of refugee rescues in the winter of 2016; having been profoundly and irreversibly affected by this borderscape ever since; and having seen and smelled and heard and touched its grounds and waters, and the flotsam and jetsam of its things and its people, I will attempt to piece together and share a fleeting image, a passing impression of this interfolding landscape. Within it, the contours between the subjectivities, sensibilities and senses of its various human occupants and the ecologies and materialities that enfolded them merge, spill over, and transubstantiate.

The iodine sting of the Aegean seawater. The sour smell of spilled petrol on rotting seaweed. The exhausted silence while huddling in the dark surveying the horizon; a volunteer rescuer perched on a hill in January, freezing to the bone. The hissing static of the VHF radio from time to time. And then: the nightly wails coming from the pitch-black sea. Your yells back in the dark against the wind. A dim flicker of flashlights and mobile phone screens in the distance. A sudden rush of blood to your head. A shiver down the back of your neck. Flashbacks. **TAK** — the portable floodlight’s hard switch is pressed on: in your hands now a makeshift lighthouse calls travellers to an uncertain harbour. The loud whirr of the electric generator, powered with leftover fuel from refugee dinghies ran aground. Feet shuffling on the sharp gravel. Cold wetsuits clinging to the skin, jammed zippers, a barking command “hurry up!”. A grey bobbing smudge on the light

beam's end, closing in. The shudder upon January waves' first bite on your naked feet. The cold. The cold. The cold. The texture and weight of other people's bodies when you carry them ashore, uphill. Their musky smell; their suppleness; their respiration's rhythm: the only identity markers during your brief encounter. How frigid children's skin, wet for hours, felt to the touch. Their pallid, wide-eyed faces you, thankfully, cannot see in the dark. The rustle and sparkle of Mylar emergency blankets unfolding and wrapping bodies in an other-worldly sheen. The acrid smell of varnished broken boatwood smoke seaside-stationed volunteers burned to warm up, highly toxic but who cared – it clung on clothes, on skin and hair, it made throats hurt and voices hoarse. Weeks after, far from the island, its waft would still come off an already washed sweater or a scarf. An inescapable reminder. These sounds and sensations are all things by their own right; deeply personal aspects of borders with animate and inanimate facets; visceral affects that cannot ever be fully conveyed, only experienced first-hand and thereafter hinted at and invoked, at best.

Through these weaving of borderlanders' affectively-charged narratives – be them migrants, rescuers, coastguard officers, volunteers or local inhabitants – and the use of visual material as “aide-memoires” to help trace the clustering and interfolding of ‘borderly’⁹ bodies, things, places and atmospheres, the notion of affective borderscapes emerges. Affective borderscapes allow the exploration of borders not as singular lines, but as multidimensional sites of affective and emotional investment, where fear, hope, longing, desire, despair, indignation, disorientation, death or rebirth converge and are implicated in various ordinary and exceptional encounters between migrants, citizens, humanitarian volunteers, state agents, and the dispersed material traces of both state power, and the undocumented migration apparatus.

Their traces are often found within the ‘anticipated’ distance from state borders. But they also erupt unexpectedly in random locations far removed from national frontiers. These eruptions span spatial scales: from global events through local milieus (a neighbourhood, a city block, a street corner), reaching all the way down to the “geography the closest in – the body” (Rich, 1986, pp. 212–213): a corporeal mobile border carrying within it emotional, mental and often physical marks and traumas embedded under their skin like shrapnel from borders past. Inner city neighbourhoods, rural locations, and digital expanses that seem to be diametrically different, and far removed from anything border-like remain connected by similar dynamics and intensities, as well as cross-locations¹⁰ and mutual affectations between the places, people, politics and powers that constitute them.

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⁹ Sarah Green describes as ‘borderly’ the qualities that give a place a sense of borders at work. It is an often indescribable sensation that emerges from the general atmosphere, the physical landscape, the people and the objects present around a place (Green and Malm, 2013).

¹⁰ The crosslocations approach foregrounded by Sarah Green (2017b, 2017a) builds upon an understanding of location as a form of political, social, economic, and technical relative positioning resulting from the workings of diverse ‘locating regimes’ (such as law, bureaucracy, borders, infrastructure, digital technologies, trade, finance, environment, language, social relations and religion) that calibrate the relative value, significance and meaning of locations. As a result, locations may have multiple and historically variable manifestations, and can overlap or coincide within the same geographical space, especially in crossroads regions, such as the Mediterranean.

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In the wake of a sociopolitically volatile era, which is increasingly characterized by the intensive and extensive proliferation of borders, migration- and border management are still commonly considered as predominantly rational and dispassionate processes. Their functions and filtering mechanisms, however, are underpinned by the instrumental top-down exertion of affective power as well as by the cultivation of emotional dispositions among political communities. At the same time, compliance to- or contestation of these forces also manifests ‘from below’ through transgressive patterns of human mobilities and mobilisations around borders, which are similarly affectively-driven.

This Ph.D. dissertation examines the impact of various actors’ affective practices on the construction, enactment and contestation of *affective borderscapes* in the southeastern Mediterranean and its Aegean appendix, and explores how those processes manifest and link up at multiple scales across space and time from a perspective that accounts for the affective dimensions of border regimes aside from their legal, infrastructural and political causes and consequences.

Through long-term ethnographic engagement with communities and individuals that have been passing through or inhabiting several locations along the much-fraught Aegean borders in times of major socioeconomic and geopolitical upheaval, this thesis formulates and puts forth the concept of affective borderscapes as an original contribution to border and migration studies. Affective borderscapes are liminal, overlapping landscapes that function as contact zones and as charged fields of often unanticipated affective interaction between assemblages of animate and inanimate actors. This concept bears great potential for the acquisition and mobilisation of knowledge, as well as for the design and application of policy and practice.