OBSERVARE
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa

e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL12 N2, TD2
Thematic dossier - *The Middle East. Local dynamics, regional actors, global challeges*
February 2022

JANUS.NET
e-journal of International Relations

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF EUROPEAN ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICIES: A PROMISE OF A DIGINIFIED LIFE

CLAIRE FELIX
claire.felix.uni1@gmail.com
Claire Felix is a PhD candidate in Development Studies at the University of Lisbon (Portugal). She holds a Master's in International Studies specialising in political dynamics in the Middle East and North Africa from ISCTE-IUL and a Bachelor in Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology from the Goethe University in Frankfurt. Her field of interest includes migration governance and asylum policies in Europe and, more specifically, the cohabitation with locals in Greece, participation in policymaking, and ethics while conducting research

Abstract

The 2015-refugee crisis fully hit Greece after years of strict austerity, challenging notions of entitlement, the role of institutions, and overall assumptions on migration. This article examines Greek asylum and migration policies and their impact on the every-day life of asylum seekers. Drawing on Foucauldian perspectives and fieldwork in Eleonas camp in Athens and Moria camp in Lesvos, it identifies the main consequences of those measures. Results show that policies are exclusionist and perpetuate irregularity and illegality. Finally, it takes the debate to a macro-level, challenging the responsibility of the European Union.

Keywords

Asylum seekers, Refugees, Governance, Power, Exclusion

How to cite this article

Felix, Claire (2021). Understanding the impact of European asylum and migration policies: A promise of a dignified life. *Janus.net, e-journal of international relations.* VOL12 N2, TD2 - Thematic dossier *The Middle East. Local dynamics, regional actors, global challenges*, February 2022. Consulted[online] in date of the last visit, https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.DT0122.5

Article received on May 18, 2021 and accepted for publication on October 30, 2021

JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations
e-ISSN: 1647-7251
VOL12 N2, TD2
Thematic dossier– *The Middle East. Local Dynamics, regional actors, global challenges*
February 2022, pp. 65-78
Understanding the impact of European asylum and migration policies:A promise of a dignified life
Claire Felix

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF EUROPEAN ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICIES: A PROMISE OF A DIGINIFIED LIFE

CLAIRE FELIX

Introduction

This article discusses the influence of Greek asylum and migration policies on the everyday life of asylum seekers and refugees coming to the European Union (EU). It aims to understand how disenfranchised individuals seeking security and safety experience policies in a context between humanitarian emergency and political frictions. The societal, political, and academic contributions teach us to acknowledge individuals' various lived realities and how existing policies reinforce control instead of freedom of movement.

Regarding the Greek context, the country first faced the 2007 global financial crisis, making it greatly affected within the EU. Then, with a total of 12 austerity packages between 2010 and 2017, Greece endured a continuous cycle of recession and high unemployment rates, leaving no one and nothing unaffected. It led to a humanitarian crisis, with historical records of homelessness, suicide, growing sickness, cuts in salaries, pension allocations, and reduced availability to public goods (Cabot, 2018).

A few years later, in 2011, the world witnessed the Arab Spring, a series of uprisings and protests against oppressive regimes and poor quality of life in the Arab World, followed by the destructive war in Syria. Overall, in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, citizens face long-standing weak governance, economic hardship, corruption, and deeply rooted religious or ethnic conflicts. Hundreds of thousands of children, women, and men have made their way towards the EU, seeking international protection. The unprecedented arrival of immigrants in 2015 challenged the EU's adequacy to respond to crises. Despite efforts to design and implement policies, the 28 countries forming the EU have implemented 28 different asylum policies, resulting in uneven burden-sharing (Felix, 2020).

Because of its geographic location, Greece represents a door to safety and security and has seen more than one million individuals crossing its borders in 2015, and so began the European 'refugee crisis'. Meanwhile, local NGOs were still dealing with their citizens' humanitarian crises on the Greek mainland, while islands such as Lesvos have seen a new wave of turmoil in their daily lives (Cabot, 2018: 18-19).

According to Campesi (2018), policies refer to a set of thoughts or action plans developed by an organization or government. They are also implemented during periods of crisis

in which decision-makers have little time to respond to specific events. Policies can represent a disruption in the daily life of individuals where peculiar measures are needed to survive (Campesi, 2018: 196-197).

Set up in 2005, the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) represents a body of EU legislation establishing minimum standards and practices for examining and determining asylum applications and managing asylum seekers and individuals recognized as refugees. In line with CEAS and founded in 2011, the institution European Asylum Support Office (EASO), aims to reinforce EU member state cooperation on asylum, improve CEAS implementation, and provide scientific and technical support to countries in need (European Commission, n.d.). Additionally, the Dublin III Regulation adopted in 2013 is an EU law defining which member state is in charge of examining an application from asylum seekers requesting international protection under the Geneva Convention. Overall, CEAS and the Dublin Regulation imply an expansion in surveillance and monitoring and external border control, directly reinforced by Frontex since 2016 (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) (European Commission, n.d.).

In March 2016, the EU-Turkey reached an agreement designed to limit the mass arrival of migrants in the EU via the Turkish territory. An important aspect was the repatriation of all migrants who had reached the EU illegally. Moreover, the EU declared its willingness to resettle Syrians living in Turkey who qualified for asylum and resettlement in the EU on a one-by-one basis. The EU promised the Turkish government six billion euros and loosened visa requirements for their citizens to travel to the EU.

The Hotspot approach was presented in the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015 but put in practice the same year as the deal complementing it. It was directly responding to migrant mobility, perceived as unmanageable and therefore ominous. This mechanism allows for the accommodation and strengthening of all relevant European agencies regarding cooperation and centralized control over external borders and asylum procedures. EASO, Frontex, Europol, and Eurojust help member states in need (Greece and Italy) and support the mechanisms for implementation and harmonization. The Hotspot approach in Greece, located on five islands (Lesvos, Samos, Kos, Chios, and Leros), shows the limited mobility imposed on individuals trapped within borders, defining everyday life by marginalization (Papada et al., 2019: 48-52).

Asylum procedures have been strongly criticized due to understaffed asylum services, leading to applications higher than registration capacities. In response, firstly, a fast-track procedure has been implemented, and secondly, interviews via Skype aimed at reducing long waiting queues. Nevertheless, the asylum process has been considered inefficient because of decisions without reasons, lack of translators/interpreters, slowness of the process, and low recognition rates (Bolani et al., 2016: 90-93).

Under the admissibility procedure, applications of Syrian nationals are given priority. If the application is considered admissible, that person can travel to the Greek mainland and have her/his application processed by the Greek asylum authority. Iraq and Afghanistan are countries with high recognition rates (when over 25% are positive decisions). For non-Syrian nationals, it is the percentage of recognition rate out of the total number of asylum decisions. Among low recognized asylum nationalities count Tunisia, Pakistan, Algeria, and Morocco. The complicated web of asylum procedures

applies arbitrary criteria (i.e., nationality and recognition rate) and cut-off dates (for example, before and after the implementation of the EU-Turkey Deal) to manage and discipline migrant mobility (Papada et al., 2019: 50).

The agreement caused problems in its implementation, as Turkey was not recognized as a safe third country by the European Commission, causing problems regarding the rule of law. Furthermore, the accord is not under the European Court of Justice jurisdiction because of its political nature, making it not legally binding for involved countries. From another point of view, the agreement was implemented to dissuade more individuals from coming (Papada et.al., 2019: 48-52).

The promised one-to-one resettlements also turned out to be lower than expected: between March 2016 and March 2021, just over 28,000 Syrian refugees were relocated from Turkey to the EU, far below the 72,000 envisaged in the agreement. To express its resentment, in the spring of 2020, the Turkish government permitted migrants to push through its territory to the Greek border, where asylum seekers were turned back, sometimes by force. In response, Greece suspended asylum applications for a month, turned away migrants who entered illegally, and deployed its military to the border. In a report, Greek officials declared Turkey as a smuggler itself. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who refused an EU offer of one billion euros in additional aid, was accused of using asylum seekers as a bargaining chip to obtain additional money, aid, and other political deals from the EU (Terry, 2021).

Presenting the most relevant European migration and asylum policies denotes their intention of tools for governance and control by creating different categories facilitating the management of asylum seekers. Zones of inequality were created involving spatial management of population mobility, guided by the need to facilitate the free movement of goods and certain people and exclude others. As a result, borders are experienced differently by different groups and individuals. This conflict between economic globalization and security preoccupation leads to inconsistent and insecure border regimes for managing mobility, built on vulnerability and bureaucratic domination (Vradis et al., 2019).

This article's contribution proposes a better understanding of how individuals with different lived realities embody policies and give rhythm to refugees' everyday lives. Furthermore, it provides a critical theoretical understanding of the existing mobility framework within the EU, the relationship between agency and freedom, and how they have reinforced marginalization, vulnerability, and exclusion instead of proposing a dignified life.

This article identifies and discusses the consequences of Greek and European asylum and migration policies on the daily life of asylum seekers. However, it does not neglect the role and livelihood of Greeks within the context of the European 'refugee crisis' but argues that it requires further detailed research. To theoretically address the topic, namely the governance of individuals, Foucault's theory about governmentality and bio-politics plays a central role in surveillance and managing mechanisms followed by the methodological framework, reflecting on the importance of research methods and ethics. Finally, results will be presented, answering the research question of this article.

1. Theory: Governing the forgotten ones

Over time, European border control has become more radical without real precedent, emphasizing the increasingly complex interplay between politics and economics, the rise of social fears, and "the obsessive deployment of surveillance technologies" (Fassin, 2011: 216).

Every power mechanism is specific to its era with the respective structure of thoughts and implementation techniques. With the beginning of modern societies, power mechanisms have taken a new way of expression, enforced by discipline based on knowledge and the production of norms and behaviours, allowing self-regulation (Foucault, 1976). In the 21st century, liberal western societies have become so preoccupied with their citizens' well-being and health, called bio-power. It is defined as "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy" (Foucault, 2009), that ones' rights reinforce others' exclusion. Framed as a productive power technology rather than repressive, it refers to the well-being and health improvement of a country's population and includes monitoring, organizing, and controlling. This control can only be put in practice through govermentality, in other words, indicators and statistics such as birth and mortality rates.

Agamben (1998) argued that the politicization of life is becoming more dangerous as it reduces humanity to the biological life that can be kept alive or killed. Human beings can be killed without impunity because they are already set outside the legal sphere. More than being excluded, asylum seekers are abandoned by international law by normalizing the 'state of exception' (Agambem, 2005). The distinction with Foucault's understanding is that he includes natural human life in the polis, while Agamben argued that it is only included when excluded.

Through her research on displacement and exile in Europe after World War II and the emergence of institutions for the "refugee" Malkki (1995) has claimed that refugee camps became framed within technologies of care and control, managing mass displacement through spatial concentration and the role of bureaucracy and administrations associated with care and control (Malkki, 1995: 498). Agier (2002) joins this argument as camps represent the combination of social conditions created by war and a place characterized by large-scale segregation where life is kept away from the regular political and social landscape. Refugee camps have seen professionalization of humanitarian assistance such as experts, scientific research programs, and academic and popular journals (Agier,2002, 318-322). Sigona (2014) proposed 'campzenship' to represent the forms of membership produced in and by the camp and rejects Agamben's State of exception as it does not represent life in the camp as a whole. Therefore, she calls to de-exceptionalise camps (Sigona, 2014) and joins Cabot (2018) in the importance to de-essentialize the category of 'refugee' (Cabot, 2018: 7), highlighting that in migration studies, the whole population should be investigated, in which migrants are part of it. This allows studying the connection between border crossers and a less mobile population.

The structured and organized development of international humanitarian assistance, characterized by the West's dominant role, relates to the global governance of

disenfranchised individuals; called humanitarian governance (Barnett, 2005). The humanitarian world uses violence to settle and balance its identity and role as caring and understanding agents, described as "striking with one hand, healing with the other" (Agier, 2010: 29).

Biopolitics can examine how humanitarian organizations and practices govern certain entities and contribute to their marginalization and insecurity, shift the accountability from states to individuals, and enforce these exclusions through the intersubjective constitution of specific categories (such as irregular migrants).

In the context of humanitarian governance and Foucault's theoretical understanding of power relations and techniques to control and govern asylum seekers and refugees are various but mainly found in bureaucracy. Over time, organizations such as the EU or the UN have developed systems, standards, knowledge, and indicators allowing constant improvement and optimization of asylum seekers' everyday lives. This bureaucratic control is to be found in the spatial control of mobility, starting when individuals cross borders and must give all necessary information to be registered in EURODAC. Keeping on with controlling and calculating migration flows for an organized reception within facilities. Secondly, it relates to the space itself, the refugee camp, precisely calculated for a specific number of individuals.

Over time, the UN and NGOs have been focusing on optimizing everyday life in refugee camps by advocating the importance of community, which has become another way of governing. Refugee camps are usually divided by vulnerabilities or ethnicities, showing the categorization of individuals from the beginning. Involving refugees through participatory schemes raises awareness of their security management with their ethics, values, and obligations, which can only be done if they first accept their victim 'statuses' to receive assistance (Bulley, 2014: 12-15).

2. Methodology

2.1. Methods

Ethnographic methods allow the researcher to immerse her/himself into a community's everyday practices and understand social phenomena. In this case, this research method is relevant when trying to understand the everyday life of asylum seekers in Greece and how asylum and migration policies are experienced.

In the frame of my Master dissertation, two phases of preliminary fieldwork have been carried out, then reformulated for this article. Firstly, six months of participant observation with the Greek non-governmental organization (NGO) Project Elea working directly inside Eleonas camp in Athens between late August 2019 and January 2020. The second phase of fieldwork occurred during February 2020 on Lesvos, specifically between Mytilini and Moria camp.

I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews, five with asylum seekers and seven with international volunteers. Templates were prepared in advance, with three sections related to the same themes: cohabitation with locals, humanitarian work and the situation in Moria, and the involvement of the Greek government and the EU. The aim

was to give people the opportunity to speak and provide time and space to raise their voices beyond research questions. Due to my limited stay on Lesvos, I decided to apply sampling, which allowed me to work with a population to represent the whole. Called 'accidental sampling' or snowball sampling, it is used when it is complicated to reach a specific community or population, in this case, asylum seekers in general or those who would feel comfortable enough conducting an interview. The only criteria for participation were the age of majority and a sufficient English level for maintaining a conversation.

Moreover, I met different volunteers with whom I built friendships, which helped me find people eligible to participate in this research. I met most of my interview partners through the convenience of sampling. This method is relatively quick (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), which allowed me to conduct twelve interviews within ten days. I also intended to conduct interviews with locals, but I decided to distribute surveys based on ten questions due to the island's tense atmosphere and my short-time presence. It included what locals think of asylum seekers fleeing to Greece and their conditions on the island, and the involvement of the Greek government and the EU. Respondents could answer with yes, no, or neutral. A total of 12 individuals of the majority age participated; seven were living between six and 56 years on the island, and five were born there.

Overall, this paper includes qualitative and quantitative methods, which can be argued as typical for anthropological research, characterized by its interdisciplinary fields of research and subjects and includes "a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions […]" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3).

2.2. Research strategy

Along with secondary sources, the research strategy used was Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), aiming at identifying concepts and categories emerging from collected data and linking them later with formal theories. Although criticized by several scholars, later re-examined individually by the authors, the goal is to limit gaps between praxis and theory and allow constant reflection between empirical data and theory.

Though the survey was based on a social constructivist frame where knowledge is constructed, it is slightly opposed but still similar to Grounded Theory, in which knowledge is created through the neutrality of the researcher. Therefore, social constructionist views society as an objective and subjective reality and is fully compatible with classical grounded theory instead of the constructionist grounded theory, which takes a relativist standpoint. Nevertheless, the relevance of such research can be questioned as it produces many representations that can each claim legitimacy (Andrews, 2012).

When I arrived at Eleonas camp, I initially wanted to research gender experiences of refugee women through participant observation. Though this would have been an important contribution to gender research, I felt that my research needed a more political approach and decided to attempt to understand the daily impact of asylum and migration policies regarding camp conditions and chaotic asylum procedures. While taking notes during meetings with coordinators, having informal discussions with volunteers and residents of the camp, and later conducting fieldwork on Lesvos, concepts and certain

narratives emerged. Generally, they referred to the lack of respect for human rights, the often arrogant and uninterested attitude of national authorities towards asylum seekers, and the locals' position. Additionally, it became clear that there was an issue of unequal power relations, misrepresentation, and categorization towards and between asylum seekers, locals, and institutions managing migration coming to the EU.

The data analyzed from interviews was done based on coding through keywords or similar statements, and data from surveys were analyzed with the support of a bar diagram, giving a visual representation for a better understanding of similarities and differences.

2.3. Ethics

To avoid human rights violations, exposure to marginalization and discrimination, and endured restrictive access to their rights, I presented an informed consent document providing information about the research, ensuring that participants understood what they agreed to and had freedom of participation before each interview. If my interview partner could not read English, I started by explaining my research and ensuring that their participation would not impact their asylum procedures as some feared and, therefore, would be done under anonymity. The concept of voluntary participation might be unfamiliar to asylum seekers. That is why I highlighted at the beginning of the conversation that they could stop it at any time without justifications. Some might experience fear, as exactly those people have been fleeing from authoritarian regimes or experienced violation of human rights (Krause, 2017: 8).

On the other hand, some asylum seekers did not have a problem with their names being published, as they wanted their stories to be heard. All my interviewees could choose where the interview would occur, mainly in coffees/bars, in public spaces like squares, or at Moria canteen. To ensure a comfortable atmosphere between the interviewees and myself, and for personal interest and curiosity, I proposed to send participants my research once finished. All of them happily accepted, building trust between us and reinforcing my intentions.

While data are collected for academic research, scholars have argued whether findings should be shared with policymakers. Jacobsen and Landau (2003) proposed the concept of *dual imperative*, which attempts to "satisfy the demands of academic peers and to ensure that the knowledge and understanding work generates are used to protect refugees and influence institutions" (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003: 186). As I support Landau and Jacobsen for sharing results with policymakers, I also endorse Krause's viewpoint to share findings with participants, underlying the importance of handing over feedback to the communities and how data was used (Krause, 2017: 24-26).

2.4. Reflection of the researcher

I believe that hierarchical differences regarding asylum seekers were not an issue due to my young age, which may have played a role. Nevertheless, I felt some hierarchal difference with locals, especially on Lesvos, as I was clearly labeled as a foreigner who could afford to be a volunteer, reinforced by the fact that I did not speak Greek. During

my fieldwork on Lesvos, international volunteers were attacked several times and injured, which did not make me feel insecure walking in Mytilini's streets but just reminded me to be more cautious. However, I mainly experienced emotional challenges during my interviews, where I was confronted with the harsh reality of being an asylum seeker, reminding me daily of my privilege.

Language barriers, specifically with Greeks, impacted my limited involvement in the field, making it complicated to reach citizens for conducting interviews. During my fieldwork on Lesvos, Greek citizens refused most of my interview proposals. As I could only stay for three weeks, I had to adapt my research methods to the dynamics of the field, which were changing nearly every day (such as two days of general strikes where everything was closed, including no public transport at all). Once I realized it would be challenging to speak with locals, I decided to work on surveys. While I was printing these, I asked the copy shop owner, who was Greek and with whom I had already talked a few times, if, in his opinion, people would be open to a survey. He confirmed with enthusiasm, saying that Greeks want to show their side of the story as well. Overall, I believe that my status as a foreigner limited my research of Greek attitudes, who maybe assumed I was an international volunteer.

A second limitation though related is my time-limited presence in the camps and, therefore limited my ability to conduct in-depth fieldwork on Lesvos and has been limited to day-time ethnography. Several asylum seekers in both facilities told me that at night time, once NGOs and volunteers were gone, the atmosphere in camps was significantly different, involving more violence, aggression, and clashes between ethnic communities but also with camp authorities.

The third limitation concerns the sampling process for interviews and surveys, as participants were chosen based on their English level and age. Consequently, this research unconsciously or unintentionally contributed to silencing some people. While it is hardly possible to involve all community members, sensitivity to processes of inclusion, exclusion, and inequalities is crucial (Krause, 2017: 9). In this case, those who could not speak English or perhaps felt uncomfortable leaving their place and being in public spaces with locals did not have the opportunity to participate in the research.

Through these formal and informal conversations with asylum seekers and refugees this fieldwork gave me the opportunity to gain a better understanding of their various lived experiences from the moment they left their home country, the countries they crossed, their relationship with smugglers, later obstacles faced and assistance received when arriving in Greece and their relationship with locals. Fieldwork undoubtedly led me to better sense both facilities' day-to-day dynamics, one considered the best camp in the country and the other as the worst of all Europe. By living for six months in Athens, and three weeks in Lesvos, the relationship between asylum seekers and locals seemed to be hanging by a thread. I saw the unequal treatment of asylum seekers and refugees from whom fundamental human rights were kept away, but I also saw locals being blamed on bare accusations, as Greeks were still enduring consequences of the financial crisis leading to an internal humanitarian crisis.

3. Results

Crossing the Aegean Sea might seem like a short geographical trip but turned out to be a deadly passage. Individuals are often more than the allowed number per boat, not always given access to safety jackets, and left alone for hours in the water. Once they arrive, locals or volunteers, providing first aid assistance, instantly make them criminals, maintaining a circle of illegality and irregularity. Strict security and surveillance techniques framed as "regularity and classificatory technologies" (Rozakou, 2017: 39), adding to sometimes illegal border controls and authorities' (in)actions represent the first consequences of asylum and migration policies, resulting in traumas, various types of violence, and cases of human trafficking (Crawley et al., 2016: 33-35). Greek coast guard authorities have also been accused of pushing asylum seekers back into Turkish water or not providing first aid assistance.

Interview partner 1 told me that he also came by boat from Turkey to Lesvos; "I came with the boat. It was so difficult. It was cold, and I was in the water for four hours." (Interview partner 1., 17.02.2020). Interview partner 2's statement is similar, claiming that the water is 'too dangerous' but that people still come (Interview partner 2., 19.02.2020).

Once individuals arrive in Reception and Identification Centers, such as Moria camp, they are fingerprinted, photographed, and all kinds of personal questions are asked based on the Dublin Regulation, making it the most relevant information in the state's eyes (Rozakou, 2017: 37-39). They are informed about their rights, restricted from the beginning, and are forced to wait for an undefined time.

Drawing on Foucault's modern understanding of power relations and the political entity refugee camps represent, biopolitics and governmentality measures are forcing rhythm upon the daily life of children, women, and men. Although policies have been implemented to assist individuals in need, provide a dignified life, and guarantee fundamental human rights, in practice, they look different and has been widely criticized for their ineffectiveness. Inhabitants of Eleonas and Moria camps have often reported to me about wrong or were not provided with a translator during interviews. Moreover, errors in documents, and understaffed asylum units, delay their applications without considering daily and structural discrimination and racism (Felix, 2020). Rozakou argues that coast guards, police officers, and general street bureaucrats were sustaining individuals' irregularity by not recording everything, practicing irregular bureaucracy, creating a 'bureaucratic limbo' (Rozakou, 2017: 40-42).

Out of my five conversations with asylum seekers, only one received refugee status, while others faced difficulties due to chaotic and extensive asylum procedures. A participant explained that when he arrived in Lesvos on a boat carrying 52 other individuals, including his wife and two young sons, they were brought directly to Moria to be identified, registered, and informed about the camps' rules. Some days later, he went with his family to the EASO office as they had an appointment there, yet he was mysteriously told that only he had not been registered. He felt distraught and perplexed, stating, "but how is this even possible? But they told me it is my problem, not theirs" (Interview partner 5., 25.02.2020). Because of this error, he had to wait 45 days longer to have a new appointment with EASO workers that, seemingly uninterested, blamed

him. Later, he told me that his first interview had been scheduled in 15 months, making him wait until May 2021, delaying his application even more and at a different time from his family, risking separation. Also, interview partner 2 was still waiting for his asylum interview. He arrived on the island in February 2019, and by the time of our conversation, he did not receive any interview date, and was losing hope of leaving the camp in Moria one day (Interview partner 2., 19.02.2020).

This shows how asylum procedures are mainly defined as 'waiting times' by applicants, making them periods of uncertainty and frustration. "Now, if you come, they will give you a piece of paper that tells you to wait. You wait for a long time, it can take you one year, eight months or six months. They do not care" (Interview partner 4., 22.02.2020). Although residents of Eleonas can enjoy better conditions than in Moria, some are still struggling with their asylum applications. After receiving two rejections, a young single male from Guinea, whom I met during my volunteering time in Athens, told me he had been waiting for his papers for over three years. Meanwhile, he is engaged daily in Project Elea's' activities, trying to accept his situation.

This limbo is reinforced in refugee camps, where everyday life is kept away from political and social dynamics, characterized by large-scale segregation. As in most camps, Eleonas and Moria's inhabitants have expressed strong feelings of uselessness and powerlessness due to insufficient occupations (Agier, 2002, Felix, 2020). Regarding the locations themselves, they are both defined by containers and tents (often self-made) in which individuals live organized by various categories such as vulnerabilities or ethnicities. Moria has received international attention for its shameful conditions, where NGO's and several other organizations accused the EU-Turkey deal of rapid and chaotic escalation. Daily life is characterized by ethnic violence between residents and local authorities, gender-based violence, illness, stealing, long waiting queues for distribution, sanitary access, no access to electricity, which leads to tenseness, agitation, and frustration. Moreover, inhabitants must face a high amount of garbage production, which the municipality of Mytilini does not adequately manage (Felix, 2020).

An interview partner told me that if he had known about the conditions in Moria camp, he would never have come to Greece, stating, "Moria is more dangerous than Afghanistan!" (Interview partner 2., 19.02.2020). He described Moria as 'hell'. Like another participant, they believe that animals in Greece are treated better than refugees. Safety and security is a recurrent issue, as, during my fieldwork in Eleonas and Moria, I have heard several times from residents about stealing problems in the camps, usually leading to ethnic quarrels. In addition, due to the lousy electricity distribution, individuals must use their phone lamps to go to the bathroom at night, where small groups are using this moment of exposure to steal phones and wallets. From five asylum seekers, two have been robbed at night.

I asked survey respondents if they thought the situation in Moria would get worse, and eleven out of twelve answered positively. Then, I asked if they think that asylum seekers receive enough help in general (including NGO's, the Greek State, and/or the EU). Seven individuals are convinced that they receive enough help, but ten respondents still understand why asylum seekers protest. I also asked international volunteers what would happen in their opinion in the following months. Some have mentioned probable more

extensive demonstrations and the coming of fascist members, calling it a 'point-of-no-return'.

During my stay of three weeks, three demonstrations were organized by locals and volunteers, protesting the opening of a new reception center and refugees' daily conditions. One night, the island saw about 200 officers of the Unit of Reinstatement of Order disembarking at Mytilinis' port. This was then followed by two days of a general strike (Smith, 2020). Eventually, life almost went back to normal when Erdoğan opened Turkey's borders only a few days later, spreading fake rumours that the EU would open its borders for a limited time. Instantly, in the middle of the night, hundreds made their way to the port, hoping to reach the mainland and other European countries. Erdoğan's political move was to obtain more financial support for refugees and his military operations in northeast Syria. Greek borders were immediately closed, asylum applications were suspended for one month (although illegally), and chaos was felt again in Mytilini. The same week, One Happy Family's community day center was victim of an arson attack, denying individuals attending daily activities. This was followed by a devastating fire inside Moria's camp in September 2020, leaving half of its inhabitants without shelter. The situation was already precarious and deteriorated when COVID-19 made its entrance in Moria camp, emphasizing one more time the failure of existing policies promising a dignified life (Felix, 2020).

Conclusion

These are just a few examples of how the daily lives of asylum seekers in Greece look like, specifically in Eleonas and Moria camps. Effects of asylum and migration policies are harsh, exclusionist, and perpetuate constant categorization, marginalization, irregularity and illegality. Along with chaotic and ineffective asylum procedures, individuals are trapped in camps with unbelievable conditions leading to frustration. The increasing mental health distress and sickness developed reflects the nature of the European 'refugee crisis', and decision-makers seem to leave the situation immoral on purpose, hoping to avoid more people coming. Bringing this debate to a global level, there is an apparent uneven burden-sharing between European member states, and when solidarity or even interest is shown, then only towards border control reinforcement and not relocation schemes.

This article profoundly challenges the Dublin Regulation, which should be designed to equal participation of asylum seekers, refugees, and locals of regions or countries hosting a high number of immigrants. Moreover, bureaucracy needs to be taken more seriously, as its neglect causes the denial of human rights to others. Finally, more research should be dedicated to understanding Greeks' positions and feelings and the effects of asylum and migration policies on their daily lives. Accordingly, this article promotes the importance of participative policies for increasing diversity and equality among social actors and groups in decision-making.

References

Agier, M. (2002). Between war and city. Towards an urban anthropology of refugee camps. *Ethnography, Field of thought*, 3(3), 317-341.

Agier, M. (2010). Humanity as an Identity and Its Political Effects (A Note on Camps and Humanitarian Government). *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development*, 1(1), 29-45.

Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Agamben, G. (2005). *State of Exception.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Andres, T. (2012). What is Social Constructionism? *Grounded Theory Review. An International Journal*, 1(11). Accessed on 21 Oct. 2021. Available at http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2012/06/01/what-is-social-constructionism/

Barnett, M.N. (2005): Humanitarian governance. *The annual review of political science*, 16, 379-398.

Bolani, L., Gemi, E. and Skleparis, D. (2016). Refugee Crisis and Asylum Policies in Greece and Italy. In Migrants and Refugees: Impact and Future Policies. Case studies of Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Greece. European Institute for the Mediterranean, 82-109.

Bulley, D. (2014).Inside the tent: Community and government in refugee camps. *Security Dialogue*, 45(1), 63-80.

Cabot, H. (2018). The European Refugee Crisis and Humanitarian Citizenship in Greece. *Ethnos*, 84(5), 747-771.

Campesi, G. (2018). Crisis, migration, and the consolidation of the EU border control regime. *Int. J. Migration and Border Studies*, 4(3), 196-221.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp.1–43). California:Sage Publications, Inc.

European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs (n.a.) (n.d.). *Common European Asylum System*. Accessed on 11 Oct. 2021.Available at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system_en

European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs (n.a.) (n.d.). *Country responsible for asylum application (Dublin Regulation).* Accessed on 11 Oct.2021. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/country-responsible-asylum-application_en

Fassin, D. (2011). Policing Border, Producing Boundaries. The Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 40, 213-226.

Felix, X. (2020). *"Moria is more dangerous than Afghanistan". A critical approach towards Greek asylum and migration policies* (Master Dissertation not edited). ISCTE, Instituto Universitario Lisboa, Lisboa.

Foucault, M. (1976). *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (Vol.I) New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (2009). *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France* 1977–1978. London: Picador Pan Macmillan.

Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of the Grounded Theory. Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago: Aldine.

Howden, D. and Fotiadis, A. (2017). Where did the money go? How Greece fumbled the refugee crisis. *The Guardian*. Accessed on 16 Oct.2021. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/09/how-greece-fumbled-refugee-crisis

Jacobsen, K. and Landau, L. B. (2003). The Dual Imperative in Refugee Research: Some Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Social Science Research on Forced Migration, Disasters, 27(3), 185-206.

Krause, U. (2017). Researching forced migration: critical reflections on research ethics during fieldwork. *Working Article Series 123*. Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.

Rozakou, K. (2017). Nonrecording the "European refugee crisis" in Greece. Navigating through irregular bureaucracy. *Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, 77, 36-49.

Terry, K. (2021). *The EU-Turkey Deal, Five Years On: A Frayed and Controversial but Enduring Blueprint*. Washington, D.C.Migration Policy Institute. Accesed on 11 Oct. 2021. Available at https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/eu-turkey-deal-five-years-on

Papada, E. Painter, J. Papoutsi, A. and Vradis, A. (2019). *New Borders. Hotspots and the European Migration Regime.* London: Pluto Press.

Sigona, N. (2014). Campzenship: reimagining the camp as a social and political space. *Citizenship Studies*, 19(1), 1-15.

Smith, H. (2020). Greeks clash again with riot police over new migrant camps. *The Guardian*. Accessed on 22 Oct. 2021. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/26/greeks-clash-again-with-riot-police-over-new-migrant-camps