Symbiosis, Social Inclusion, Integration and Solidarity in Europe: Current Challenges and Future Prospects

Edited by Despina Syrri

SYMΒIOSIS

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Inclusion, Integration and Symbiosis: An Introduction

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Greece continues to be a major entry point into Europe for refugees and migrants and has received well over a million individuals since January 2015. While the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement and closure of the Balkans route in March 2016 significantly slowed migration flows, a hoard of challenges remain while new ones opened. The crisis faced by the European Union and Greece has been identified as primarily a crisis of policy and management, yet also of reception and integration. In Europe migration has played almost no part in fostering the changes that have left so many people feeling disaffected in the past three decades. Migrants are not responsible for the weakening of the welfare systems, the transformation of mainstream political parties, the lack of trust or the imposition of austerity policies. Migration has, however, come to be a means through which many perceive these changes as narratives on migration and forced displacement demonstrate, and migrants often become a convenient scapegoat.

From 2015 onwards in Greece, the entire landscape of migration and forced displacement governance and management has undergone significant transformations, particularly regarding asylum seekers' and refugees' reception and the open question of what comes after their initial processing, particularly given the significant number of people who remain trapped in Greece. The urgent needs and pressures that have arisen in 2015 have led to the creation of refugee camps in response to the urgency of providing humanitarian assistance, a decision promoted by the European Commission and the Greek government. Meanwhile, the EC also funded the ESTIA

accommodation programme in flats through UNHCR for about 20,000 persons in a few cities and towns run by the respective municipalities and NGOs. There are shelters for unaccompanied children, yet for a very long time these covered about half of the actual need, while temporary shelter has been provided occasionally at hotels.

As winter 2020 closes in, thousands of refugees in Greece face homelessness and destitution. While winter always poses a challenge, this year is likely to become one of the most challenging, due to the ongoing pandemic, a decrease in time length of the support for refugees, and the lack of a comprehensive integration strategy from authorities. Around 11,000 people who were granted asylum were notified amidst a global pandemic that they were going to be evicted from apartments for vulnerable people (ESTIA), hotel rooms under the Temporary Shelter and Protection program (FILOXENIA), accommodation in camps on the islands and on the mainland during the autumn. These evictions follow a policy according to which refugees are forced to 'stand on their own feet and fend for themselves' within one month after protection status is granted, resulting in an end to accommodation, access to food support, and cash assistance from the EU Commission.

The International Organisation for Migration run, and European Commission funded, HELIOS Integration Support program has enrolled 22,304 refugees, but so far only 8,683 people have been able to access rental subsidies for accommodation. For a great number of people, it will not be possible or feasible to receive HELIOS support. Many refugees have been unable to access social rights such as social security numbers (PAAYPA), tax numbers (AFM) or bank accounts, necessary to get a job or rent an apartment, because of bureaucratic obstacles, language barriers and discrimination. The HELIOS program provides a good start but cannot substitute a comprehensive integration strategy which considers that integration efforts need to start from the reception stage.

Particularly vulnerable are the refugees who have been evicted or are facing eviction, including survivors of gender-based violence or torture, people with health issues or disabilities, single women and single-parent families and people from the LGBTQI community. Many refugees have difficulties or are unable to become 'self-sufficient' (a wicked term, used often and assuming that all citizens are 'self-sufficient'), because of vulnerabilities or problems accessing essential services and the labour market. Consequently, many people ended up squatting in Athens and Thessaloniki squares; others cannot leave accommodation as they fear of becoming homeless. Yet the European experience shows that in Greece and Italy, refugees who are dismissed from the formal accommodation system but have not found a job nor a house,

or individuals who have not been granted asylum, end up living in parks, makeshift camps and informal settlements, being exposed to exploitation especially in the informal and illegal labour market (MSF, 2018).

Problems with access to support and services are exacerbated for refugees in camps because of the ongoing since almost March 2020 Covid-19 restrictions and the very often remote locations of these sites, making it nearly impossible to search for housing, access services or find work. For many refugees in camps, food insecurity is a constant risk as cash assistance is halted within one month, including food packages. The announced transit sites for those evicted only provide a band-aid solution for some refugees and only ever for a maximum of two months. Without proper support, the number of homeless people in cities increases.

A lasting strategy for social security and integration which includes access to adequate and affordable housing, including social housing, to ensure the full and effective enjoyment of human rights, in line with the EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion would be important[1].

In Greece, the term 'integration' has been used primarily when discussing the Roma communities, thus it is necessary to unpack these narratives (See Iliadis in this volume). Integration indeed is an ambivalent concept. It often rests on the precarious and difficult balance between the need for recognition of diversity, which allows the immigrant not to feel the object of contempt as a member of an 'other' culture, and the desire for assimilation, which is motivated from the legitimate aspiration to equal perspectives of social and occupational advancement. The dominant 'integration' paradigm often generates exclusion, as it presupposes immobility, a condition not possible for many. Scholars also highlight that the current policy framework and the governance system of migration and integration are excessively compartimentalised missing a nexus. Such a policy gap is common to many European countries and has negative implications for economic and social integration as it leads to informal labour, segregated and marginalised living, and decreased access to education and health.

In September 2020, the European Commission presented its proposal for the New Migration Pact, with the aim of translating the conclusions from the refugee 'crisis' of 2015-2016 into political decisions and policies. With this proposal, the Commission seeks to reconcile the different approaches and interests of the Member States on the issue of migration and its management. The differences between the Member States on the issue of immigration

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1   https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/integration/action-plan-integration-third-country-nationals_en

policy are huge, with the gap widening in recent years. Since 1999, the Commission has aimed to establish a Common European Asylum System with various legislative initiatives (2003-2005 and 2010-2013), in particular the Dublin III Regulations, Eurodac (the fingerprint system) and EASO (the European Asylum Office) and the Asylum Procedures, Living Conditions and Recognition Requirements Guidelines (concerning the establishment of requirements for the recognition of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a single refugee status or for persons entitled to subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection provided).

Cities are the political and spatial field for the integration of refugees (See Chatziprokopiou in this volume). The physical access to jobs, education, social infrastructure and urban amenities remains of crucial significance, as well as the question of neighbourhood effects, segregation and spatial mismatch (See Papastergiou et al. in this volume). Current research has identified different dynamics of integration which unfold after the settlement of migrants (Poteet & Nourpanah, 2016), confirming the relevance of housing for the further development of the individual integration process.

The idea of settlement and camps as the only subject in urban planning regarding refugees needs to be overcome (see Gelastopoulou in this volume). As Dalal, Darweesh, Misselwitz and Steigemann (2018) argue, refugees are urban actors practicing spatial behaviour, which has a transformative impact even in the classic refugee camp, if such a camp exists. Shifting from terms like integration to narratives of solidarity, d'Auria, Daher and Rohde (2018) work out based on a comparative study of three European cities, urban planning might not have the right narrative for an integrative approach where urban planning is no longer thought of as a topdown management affair, consequently the inclusion of citizens and residents becomes especially important regarding asylum. The need clearly emerges for local and national policy to give voice to those who are the recipients and beneficiaries of the integration decision making process (see Petromelidis in this volume).

Integration and the pandemic

All the above are only exacerbated and brought to the fore by the pandemic. Measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Europe, including the avoidance of congestion and restrictions on travel and assembly, have affected the functioning of asylum systems in Europe, as well as the living conditions of people in areas such as the registration of new asylum applications and the

issuance of relevant documents, the procedure for determining refugee status or judicial review. The consequences have been serious for the individuals concerned, as well as for the states. For example, in countries where no new asylum applications have been registered, the residence of these people is not regulated and thus they do not have access to basic assistance and health services. There has been no provision for huge queues after the mitigation of measures and the, through partial, reopening of services. Also, in countries where asylum proceedings have been suspended, national asylum authorities faced significant challenges when proceedings resumed. There is also a risk of losing or reversing previous positive results in national asylum systems.

None of the protocols indicated by both the Greek Health Organisation EODY and the World Health Organization can be applied to the conditions in the reception and identification centers. The call for the evacuation of hotspots on the islands was not implemented when possible in early March 2020, and the pandemic created practical problems with the movement of large populations. The first outbreak of the coronavirus found the camps already overcrowded, while the health status of refugees and migrants on the islands is strained due to neglect, with either existing or emerging health problems, due to lack of access to health services. There is still a lack of assurance that all accommodation has adequate medical staff and services, as well as adequate sanitation and running water, and the granting of free access to public health care to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants with no discriminations.

Regarding the camps in the mainland and the occurrence of cases there, the announcement of 28/4/2020 of the IOM clarifies the issue of accountability between the state and the organizations that support services at the invitation of the Greek state and with funding from the European Commission: "[The] migrant accommodation structures [...] are part of the Greek reception system. "According to Greek law, both the hotels and the mainland accommodation structures are under the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum, including security issues." Civil society organizations monitored and reacted to the government's decision to repeatedly extend the measures to restrict the movement of residents in the Reception and Identification Centers of the country as well as in mainland hospitality structures, in the general context of preventing the occurrence and spread of COVID-19 cases.

The fact that the government has not provided justification for this decision raises questions about the necessity of this measure given that restrictions of movement have been lifted for the rest of the country's population. Although restrictions on the freedom of movement for the protection of public health may be necessary and justified, they should be evidence-based, and not be subject to arbitrary criteria that imply discrimination. In any case, medical

grounds cannot be invoked for the continued restriction of free movement in these hosting structures, as no scientific reasoning has been put forward to justify the restrictions on this basis. Moreover, in some cases the restrictions violate the EU directive on reception conditions (2013/33, Article 8 on detention).

As international organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) have pointed out, migrants and refugees are particularly vulnerable to the spread and impacts of COVID-19. There is no evidence that quarantining entire camps effectively limits the transmission of COVID-19 in settings of reception and detention, or provides any additional protective effects for the general population, above those that could be achieved by conventional containment and protection measures. As a result, a rational strategy for the prevention and protection from COVID-19 should focus on improving precarious housing conditions, which make it impossible to apply social distancing measures in overcrowded accommodation centers. To date, insufficient steps have been taken in this direction. In fact, in centers where restrictions on movement have been imposed and prolonged, there has been increased psychological pressure, stress and anxiety that can result in the deterioration of the overall wellbeing of asylum seekers. Furthermore, restrictions to movement hamper the ability of asylum seekers to access crucial services (medical, legal, etc) outside the facilities where they reside.

The following is a review, based on material from media publications, of the key times in the lives of refugees and asylum seekers and the formulation of Covid-19 related policies and practices.

13/03/2020. Important notice - Temporary suspension of administrative services to the public. Source: Asylum Service

The Greek Asylum Service has announced that all administrative services to the public are suspended for the period from 13/03/2020 to Friday 10/04/2020 in order to protect public health and limit further spread of COVID-19 virus. Applicants' cards and residence permits that were due to expire within the above mentioned period remained valid.

13/03/2020. Suspension of operation of the Asylum Service. Source: efsyn.gr

The Asylum Service suspends its operation as part of the emergency measures to deal with the spread of COVID-19 virus.

17/03/2020. Ministry of Migration: Measures against the spread of COVID-19. Source: Euronews

The Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum announced prevention measures against the spread of Covid-19 for all Reception and Identification Centers, camps and the Asylum Service. Among others, all visits of individuals and organizations, as well as their activities within RICs and camps were suspended for at least 14 days. The entry was allowed only to those working in the RICs and camps, while the operation

of informal education structures in the camps has also been suspended alongside with all the indoor areas activities (gyms, libraries, etc.).

18/03/2020. IOM, UNHCR announce temporary suspension of resettlement travel for refugees. Source: **IOM**

IOM & UNHCR have announced temporary measures to suspend resettlement travels for refugees due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, a call was made to states to ensure that vulnerable groups of refugees that need to be moved urgently, will be relocated to the host countries where it is organized to move.

19/03/2020. Confinement of refugees on the islands is a criminal policy. Source: **efsyn.gr**

The Greek government has imposed movement restrictions for refugees and migrants on the islands by adopting preventing measures imposed by the police that had not been taken for the general population, although no COVID-19 case had appeared in the RICs up to the date that the article was written. At the same time, humanitarian and medical organizations have called for immediate decongestion of the islands and evacuation of RICs, asking for immediate transfer of the most vulnerable groups to suitable small-scale camps inland where the general population protection measures could be followed and the access to sanitation would be safe.

25/03/2020. "Protect the most vulnerable to ensure protection for everyone" Open letter signed by 256 Organisations. Source: **symbiosis.org.gr**

On 25 March 2020, 256 organisations have signed an open letter addressed to EU and Greek officials requesting to immediately protect public health with steps to protect those residing in camps, camp employees and society at large, starting from an urgently decongest of the island of North-East Aegean. The letter also calls everyone to restore legality and be mindful of not neglecting refugees and other vulnerable groups in times of crisis.

26/03/2020. Commissioner calls for release of immigration detainees while COVID-19 crisis continues, Statement by the Commissioner for Human Rights. Source: **Council of Europe**

Commissioner called all Council of Europe member states to review the situation of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants in immigration detention, and to release them to the maximum extent possible. She also asked for prioritization of the release of the most vulnerable and immediate release of children, whether unaccompanied or with their families. It has also been asked from the authorities of member states to refrain from issuing new detention orders to persons who are unlikely to be removed in the near future and to ensure that those released from detention are given appropriate access to accommodation and basic services, including health care.

28/03/2020. New detention measures despite the international calls for evacuation. Source: **efsyn.gr**

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum has announced new measures including suspension of financial aid to refugees on the islands until the installment of ATMs in the RICs, as well as suspension of the operation of shops inside camps. Also, the establishment of settlements around the RICs for medical examination and the suspension of the evictions of refugees who have completed the asylum procedure from the apartments of the ESTIA programme until May 13 has been announced.

30/03/2020. New vacancies in apartments to decongest camps... after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Source: **efsyn.gr**

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum announced long-term measures to decongest refugee camps starting at the end of the current year, by extending the hosting programme ESTIA, despite calls from the international community and Greek agencies to immediately decongest camps in order to protect refugees and migrants, as well as the public health from the COVID-19 pandemic.

01/04/2020. They are looking for reception spots for newly arrived refugees. Source:efsyn.gr

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum has asked municipalities of the North Aegean islands to indicate new spots for the temporary accommodation of newly arrived refugees away from the existing Reception and Identification Centers and away from the urban fabric or in hotels where newly arrived refugees can stay in quarantine aiming to protect public health.

02/04/2020. Ritsona camp is put in quarantine – 20 persons detected with COVID-19 virus. Source: naftemporiki.gr

The Ritsona camp for asylum seekers was put into lockdown for 14 days after the contacts of the confirmed case of COVID-19 hosted in the camp were traced. For a period of 14 days, entering and exiting from the camp were explicitly banned, with an enhanced presence of the Greek police in the perimeter of the camp to observe movement restrictions and to establish a Ministry of Migration and Asylum unit in the camp o supervise the implementation of the measures.

02/04/2020. IOM raises concern over increasing COVID-19 cases recorded in Greece mainland refugee and migrant camp. Source: IOM

IOM expressed concerns over the 23 migrants that have been tested positive for COVID-19 in the Ritsona open accommodation site. Additionally, IOM asked for immediate inclusion for all migrants and refugees in the national response to COVID-19, while highlighting the fact that the COVID-19 cases on the mainland raise concern for the migrants in the Reception and Identification Centres on the five islands of the North-Eastern Aegean where overpopulation makes it extremely difficult to take necessary precautions, such as physical distancing between people and vigilant hygiene.

05/04/2020. In quarantine the camp in Malakasa – A refugee is positive for COVID-19. Source: Euronews

The "old camp" in Malakassa was put into lockdown for 14 days after the detection of a case positive to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The Greek police strengthened its presence on the perimeter of the camp, while the Ministry of Migration and Asylum also placed a unit in the camp. EODY also strengthened its presence in the area.

17/04/2020. Greece to move more than 2.300 "COVID-19 vulnerable" migrants. Source: INFOMIGRANTS

On April 16, the ministry announced that after the 19th of April and in a two weeks period, 2,380 "vulnerable person" will be transferred from camps on Aegean islands to apartments, hotels and other camps on the mainland with the aim to further reduce the risk of the virus outbreak, even though no coronavirus case has been officially reported up to that moment in the camps at the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos.

21/04/2020. 150 COVID-19 cases found in the refugee camp in Kranidi. Source: efsyn.gr

A total of 150 people were diagnosed positive to COVID-19 in Kranidi, out of a total of 497 people that have been tested at the hotel, which serves as a shelter for refugees and migrants. The structure was then put into lockdown for 14 days. The structure was already in quarantine since April 16 when the first case, a pregnant woman, was identified.

22/04/2020. Greece: Island camps not prepared for COVID-19. Source: Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch reports that Greek authorities have not done enough to address the acute overcrowding and lack of health care, access to adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene products to limit the spread of COVID-19 in camps for asylum seekers. The article presents a timeline of measures taken by the Greek government while recording the situation in relation to migration and refugee flows the past months.

23/04/2020. Measures and fears for the protection of refugees by Covid-19. Source: Inside Story

The increase in reported COVID-19 cases in refugee and migrant camps raises concerns, as many of them accommodate numbers of people that far exceed their capacity. The Inside Story article presents the measures and concerns regarding the protection of this vulnerable group.

26/04/2020. Greece must evacuate refugees and migrants to safety amidst COVID-19. Source: Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor reports its concerns "about the fate of thousands of asylum seekers trapped in infamous unequipped Greek refugee camps like Moria." The article highlights "the dangerous density and overcrowding of asylum seekers in Greek camps, combined with lack of hygiene and inadequate sanitary conditions" that poses in an extreme risk the safety and health of those individuals.

10/05/2020. Greece: Extension of restrictive measures in refugee camps. Source: Euronews

The extension of restrictive measures until 21st May for refugees and migrants in the reception and identification centers and in all camps has been introduced with a relevant joint ministerial decision of the Ministers of Civil Protection, Michalis Chrysochoidis, Health, Vassilis Kikilias and Immigration and Asylum, Notis Mitarakas to limit the spread of COVID-19.

13/05/2020. In an overcrowded Greek refugee camp, fighting COVID-19 before it arrives. Source: DirectRelief

More than 100 refugees have joined forces to raise awareness of the threat posed by COVID-19 among camp residents, but they say progress has been slow. A Europe-wide letter-writing campaign is attempting to persuade nations there to accept more refugees from the Greek camps, but has yet to yield results. COVID -19 has made its way into refugee populations in Greece, and most recently onto the island of Lesbos. Experts and activists say it's only a matter of time before COVID-19 spreads to the Moria camp.

19/05/2020. Felonious mistakes were made in Katehaki. Source: efsyn.gr

More than 1,500 people, including infants and children, were crowded outside the Asylum Service which reopened to the public since early in the morning. Eventually, only 100 people were served due to lack of timely preparation of the Asylum Service for the gradual service of thousands of pending issues and lack of proper information. These conditions were extremely dangerous for the spread of COVID-19.

26/05/2020. COVID-19: The refugee camp in Kranidi is in quarantine. Source: Documentonews.gr

The hotel, which operates as a shelter for refugees and migrants in Kranidi, has been re-quarantined due to the occurrence of COVID-19 cases. The restriction of movement for third countries nationals residing in the camp is applied until June 8, 2020 in a perimeter strictly defined by the Greek Police (EL.AS.).

27/05/2020. Greece ready to welcome tourists as refugees stay locked down in Lesbos. Source: The Guardian

The threat of coronavirus has increased anxiety and led to mounting tensions in the camp. There have been two serious fights in the past few days. One 23-year-old woman has died and a 21-year-old man is in a critical condition. As Greece starts to see some signs of normality returning, each week brings fresh turmoil to the thousands of residents of Moria, who are still living under lockdown in a space not much bigger than one square mile.

27/05/2020. Up to 11,000 refugees at risk of homelessness in Greece. Source: INFOMIGRANTS

Protests have been taking place in Athens following Migration Minister Notis Mitarakis announcement on Thursday that 60 of the 93 hospitality facilities created in hotels for asylum seekers on the mainland

will be closed in 2020. Starting from June 1, residents will be transferred to other facilities in Greece or will be referred to the UN Refugee Agency's ESTIA (Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation) integration program, which was put in place with the help of the EU to offer urban accommodation and financial aid to asylum-seekers in Greece. The decision will affect approximately 11,000 people who have secured asylum in Greece but are still living in the reception-style facilities and subsidized hotels, located mainly in the Athens and Thessaloniki areas.

29/05/2020. "8.300 refugees to be evicted from their homes in Greece" Joint Letter to EU and Greek officials. Source: symbiosis.org.gr

On 29 May 2020, 64 organisations signed a joint letter addressed to EU and Greek officials regarding the eviction of thousands of recognized refugees from their homes in the midst of a global pandemic planned by the Greek Government. The organizations highlighted the need for a long term strategy on integration and housing that will ensure that nobody faces homelessness and smooth transition from camps to host community.

02/06/2020. Greece must ensure safety net and integration opportunities for refugees. Source: UNHCR

UNHCR declared its deep concerns over government-arranged exit of some 9,000 recognized refugees from Greece's reception system which began on 1 Jun, while in the coming months another 11,000 refugees will have to transit from assistance for asylum seekers to general social welfare, once recognized as refugees by Greece's asylum authorities. UNHCR expressed once again concerns about the premature end of assistance for many recognized refugees, before they have an effective access to employment and social welfare schemes, foreseen by Greek law, while urging Greece to increase the national reception capacity at sites, apartments, hotels and through cash for shelter.

04/06/2020. Europe's far-right exploits COVID-19 for anti-refugee propaganda. Source: Balkan Insight

The analysis presents the ways that the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has been exploited by the right and far-right parties in Greece and Italy to enhance their anti-refugee propaganda, while feeding hate rhetoric and hostility towards migrants and refugees.

06/06/2020. COVID-19 - Polykastro: Restriction of movement in the camp. Source: GRtimes

The movement of third-country nationals in the Polykastro camp in Nea Kavala, Kilkis, was restricted until 17/06/2020 by a joint decision of the Ministers of Civil Protection, Health, Migration and Asylum.

10/06/2020. Extension of quarantine at the RICs in Lesvos, Samos and Chios. Source: efsyn.gr

Instead of adopting medical measures, the government decided to extend the lockdown in the RICs until June 21, when almost three months of continuous quarantine will be completed. The lockdown of the structures on the islands started earlier than the quarantine for the general population and continues long after the lifting of the measures, without a case being recorded that justifies the extension of the extreme measure of exclusion.

12/06/2020. UNHCR calls on Greece to investigate pushbacks at sea and land borders with Turkey. Source: UNHCR

UNHCR is urging Greece to investigate multiple reports of pushbacks by Greek authorities at the country's sea and land borders, possibly returning migrants and asylum seekers to Turkey after they had reached Greek territory or territorial waters. Such allegations have increased since March and reports indicate that several groups of people may have been summarily returned after reaching Greek territory.

12/06/2020. Greece / COVID-19: The extension of restriction measures for asylum seekers until June 21 is unjustified. Source: Médecins Sans Frontières

"The extension of the restriction measures until the 21st of June for asylum seekers living in reception centers will further reduce their already limited access to basic services and medical care and, in the current

phase of the COVID-19 epidemic, is in no way justified in terms of public health", says Lisa Papadimitriou, Advocacy Officer of Doctors Without Borders in Lesvos.

12/06/2020. Quarantine extended at Greek island migrant camps. Source: INFOMIGRANTS

The Greek government recently extended lockdown measures until June 21 at crowded migrant camps on some of the country's islands in the Aegean Sea. This means the lockdown there will last almost three months. Meanwhile, anti-coronavirus measures are being relaxed at several camps on the mainland. NGOs like Doctors Without Borders have heavily criticized that decision. Meanwhile, a new government regulation will require thousands of refugees to move out of state housing.

21/06/2020. Greece extends lockdown on more than 120,000 migrants, refugees. Source: Voanews

In a terse weekend statement, Greece's Migration and Asylum Ministry said confinement for those in the country's migrant holding centers would be extended through July 5, the second such extension decreed by authorities since they were first imposed in March. No explanation for the extension was provided by the ministry in the single-sentence announcement it issued late Saturday. The announcement's timing, hours after 2,000 people rallied in Athens streets for World Refugee Day, demanding an end to the confinement of asylum seekers and improvement in migrants' abysmal living conditions, was controversial.

22/06/2020. Hasty evacuation of the Elefsina camp until Thursday. Source: efsyn.gr

As of Thursday 25 June, about 200 refugees living in the Elefsina camp are expected to move out in order for a structure to be built that will accommodate people participating in the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme implemented by the International Organization for Migration.

22/06/2020. The hasty evacuation of the refugee camp in Elefsina is cancelled. Source: efsyn.gr

A few hours after the officials of the refugee camp in Elefsina became aware of the sudden decision to evacuate the camp on Thursday 25 June, in order to function as a structure for those participating in the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme, the International Organization for Migration finally cancels the evacuation "for operational reasons", according to the latest information to those responsible.

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Migration Issues Sticking Out

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Discussing 'integration'

European and Euro-centred scholarship on migration has increased much after the so- called refugee crisis in 2015. Special emphasis has been put on the policy relevance of such research, while less attention was paid on its risks, including that of reproducing instead of challenging institutional categories such as the distinction between voluntary/involuntary migration, asylum seekers, refugees, and so on. These categories despite been created to protect individuals, ultimately might do the opposite. There is also increased expectation that research on migration leads to salvific outcomes, providing policy 'solutions' to the 'problem' of migration and integration. The purpose though of knowledge coproduction is to formulate good questions, or to change the nature of the questions, reframing perspectives. Research should ultimately be able to expose the violence of current migration and integration policy and research, putting forward counter-narratives.

According to Schinkel (2018), research on migration and integration today in Europe especially occurs within a discourse that is "riddled with racism hard to avoid". Integration has failed, both "as a political way to describe the process in which migrants settle, and as a concept in social science to analyse such processes" (ibid). While in migration research, integration practice is narrowly bounded to service provision and rights enhancement, one could also listen to people's accounts of practices – amidst improvisation, precarity, alternative scripts of citizenship and how state rules are negotiated.

The literature around integration conceptualisations, discourses, practices and policies demonstrate that integration is a process, long-term, localised and that policy cannot be proscriptive, but should be reflective and develop from and by local communities and local government. Literature on local responses and municipalities and civil society and community action offers examples of a focus on place/space and micro-level integration strategies and experiences. There remains a gap, however, between focus on policy made at the international/national level and local responses to migration issues and integration. Likewise, case studies and examples focus on policy navigation, design and implementation at the meso-level demonstrating the gap between macro and meso policy/funding or to highlight innovation in migrant integration. Although the micro-level relational aspects of integration are highlighted by some of the literature, it also highlights that there remains significant gap in understanding how this relational ethnographic focus and processes can affect policy. What emerges particularly strongly from this literature is that integration as a concept, discourse or policy, particularly in the context changing migration patterns and processes, is not naturally conducive to practice that generates inclusions. Indeed, the calls for ethnographic method, and refocus on relational processes, embedding, emplacement, encounters and a feminist ethics of care to challenge dominant paradigms of migrant integration practice and theory.

It is important to reframe integration away from the current dominant and top-down paradigm, and instead conceptualize it as a relational practice constituted by multiple incremental and transformative formal and informal encounters between displaced people, places, institutions and services that are developed to endure and maintain life. Inhabitation is ultimately the result of complex daily strategies of learning, navigating and governing the city. Such an understanding would enable us to shift our focus onto the historical and present experiences of those who 'have to integrate', recognizing the centrality of migrants' and refugees' own assessments to policy innovation.

Evaluating the impact and the success rate of an integration policy is difficult as findings are not coherent. Currently, 'successful' integration is measured as the "achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between networks within the community; and structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the local environment." (Ager & Strang, 2008:166). These elements are sufficiently broad to build a valid framework for analysis. There is, however, no such policy or practice in existence that ticks all these boxes. Furthermore, while the extent of labour market integration and school performances are easy to capture through analysis of national statistics, it is very difficult to

evaluate other indicators such as civic engagement and social integration, which are based on perceptions (OECD, 2015;2018)1. Arguably, the image of integration that emerges from such criteria does not account for all the actors involved in the integration process beyond the host/guest binary (Sigona, 2005). Furthermore, such an exercise - of comparing statistic data and integration outcomes to assess the success of integration - is extremely challenging, not least because it does not take into account local specific economic, political and social contexts that widely contribute to and shape outcomes (Vertovec, 2009).

Scholars highlight a huge gap between national policies and local implementation (Scholten, 2018). The failure of the first have greatly left the challenge of integration in the hands of the latter. While large cities and metropolitan areas have greater resources to deal with the challenge of migration and integration and much to offer to migrants and refugees, small and medium cities are often left alone to address the challenge while simultaneously being less attractive places for migrants to find employment, housing and networks (Balbo, 2015). City scale and its significance for settlement, integration and belonging is addressed in the literature of several scholars, including studies of migrant identities (Back, 2006; Ehrkamp, 2005), place-making (Binnie et al., 2006; Gill, 2010), the development of urban enclaves (Graham and Marvin, 2001), and citizenship and belonging (Phillips, 2014). Philips and Robinson (2015) reveal the urban contextuality of migrants lives and situatedness of their community building and belonging, identifying opportunity for integration as higher in 'top-scale' cities in comparison to 'down-scale' cities (Phillips & Robinson 2015:6). However, they do not elaborate significantly on the causes or significance of this difference to integration. Europe made of myriad of small and medium cities and dispersed sprawling territories around large metropolitan areas. Current highly criticized urban dispersal policies in countries such as Italy, Greece, Germany and Denmark push toward the relocation of migrants and refugees to small towns (Manara & Piazza, 2018; Darling, 2016; Netto, 2011). Urban dispersal implies the generation of new forms of decision making that are often performed in collaboration between different actors (local administration, citizen initiatives, through multilevel governance) and through a continuous negotiation between global and local forces and needs (Balbo, 2015).

Current national and local policy hardly capture individual trajectories, about which little is still known because existing top-down integration measures do not engage refugees and migrants as actors in their making. Lack of refugee voice in the policy is an issue that has been advocated for widely. On the other side, scholars also highlight policy fragmentation and erosion (Spotti, 2007, 2008, 2011): integration is never conceived as development or urban

issue. Despite multiple accounts of the multidimensionality of integration (Castles et al. 2002; Musterd, 2003; Phillips, 2006; Grzymala-Kazlowskaa & Phillimorea, 2018), and recognition that housing, labour and welfare are integral and indivisible components of socially inclusive cities, they are still dealt with in isolation, often creating double standards. Putting at the core of a policy the experiences, mobility, movement patterns, coping mechanisms and strategies of migrants and refugees in the city is extremely challenging, either because it is still a poorly understood issue, and also due to a lack of appropriate methods to map reality, especially because people tend to move frequently and often make themselves invisible to keep their independence and freedom of movement.

Integration is an ambivalent concept. It often rests on the precarious and difficult balance between the need for recognition of diversity, which allows the immigrant not to feel the object of contempt as a member of an 'other' culture, and the desire for assimilation, which is motivated from the legitimate aspiration to equal perspectives of social and occupational advancement. Many scholars (for example Castles et al. 2002; Musterd, 2003; Phillips, 2006a; Grzymala-Kazlowskaa & Phillimorea, 2018) have pointed out that the concept of integration is multidimensional, in the sense that it extends to different spheres of social life. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2014) argues that integration is, in all its heterogeneity, a multidirectional, multidimensional and often conflictual process that is intrinsically related to diverse forms and practices of urban encounter: with and between different people, places and services, temporalities and materialities, beliefs and desires, and sociocultural and political systems (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2015, 2016a). Acknowledging the multiplicity of encounters embedded in the city, makes it possible to move away from the problematic asymmetrical and colonial approach to migration suggested by words like 'integration' and 'hospitality' and even 'welcome', at least in the current dominant use. Redefining integration as a set of complex encounters enable us to introduce the concept of inhabitation (Boano and Astolfo, 2019) not specifically related to housing but as a way of existing in the city hence referring to the ability of a subject to dwell, care for, repair and imagine relationships and places and constantly repositioning oneself according to an individual trajectory both spatial and temporal in a constant negotiation of life.

Integration is widely recognised as a contested and chaotic (Robinson, 1998) concept. There is no single universal definition of its meaning (Castles et al, 2001). Bohning et al (1995) considers it as an individual and social process – hence inherently subjective and reversible - and as a state resulting from the process. In this sense, access to equal opportunities is a key factor to either promote integration (as a process) and to evaluate the level of integration (as

a state).

With regards to integration into labour markets, Bohning suggests the following formula: 'comparable groups of workers should enjoy comparable opportunities and outcomes in terms of employment, remuneration, socio-economic status and other labour-market relevant characteristics.' (p.2). Sigona (2005) argues that integration is 'not only a "two-way process", a definition that seems to imply two homogeneous subjects: the host society and the refugee community. It rather involves many actors, agencies, logics and rationalities' (p.118). Similarly, UNHCR identifies integration as a multi-actors effort. Yet, refugees are not recognized as agents in the process, while state and society remain widely unproblematised.

As Mignolo suggests, "Inclusion is a one-way street and not a reciprocal right. In a world governed by the colonial matrix of power, he who includes and she who is welcomed to be included stand in codified power relations" (Mignolo, 2011:xv). There is still a sense that "they" are being incorporated into "our" codes, into "our" spaces, rather than there being a more radical epistemic challenge unfolding here (Jefferess 2013).

Integration through the idea of inhabitation is framed through the notion of holding together to 'sustain life and continue its diverseness' (Bellacasa, 2017), and as a way to "maintain, continue and repair 'our world'" (Tronto, 1993:103). Building on this definition inhabitation can be seen as a form of living that is relational (Latimer and Munro, 2009) and help to think migration and integration away from "the government of populations" (Foucault, 1980 [1981:52]). Inhabitation becomes an infrastructure (Simone, 2004) through which migrants and refugees test a repertoire of practices, tactics and relations with the ultimate purpose to hold and resist marginalization. Inhabiting is in its essence an intersubjective practice, that involves intersecting forms of dwelling, repair, care (for the other and for the commons) and imagination of an ethnographic present and a civic future (Keith 2012). Practices as open ended, heterogeneous accomplishments take place within a specific horizon of sense and a set of concerns which the practice itself brings to bear (Nicolini, 2009). As authors such as Heidegger (1947) and Wittgenstein (1953) made clear, practice constitutes the unspoken and scarcely notable background of everyday life. Practices therefore always need to be drawn to the fore, made visible and turned into an epistemic object to enter discourse.

Migration and integration policies might equally endanger or enable the ability to inhabit the city, contributing to the increase of what Stonebridge (2018) calls "placeless people", individuals who are "denied political sovereignty" and therefore become "strange" to citizens and "alien" to their

own future. Scholten (2018) points out that the current policy formulation of the migration/integration nexus as a continuum, as a chain from arrival, admission, civic integration to citizenship does not account for forms of integration that happens formally and informally at multiple stages and on multiple scales (Fawaz 2016). Furthermore, the dominant 'integration' paradigm often generates exclusion, as it presupposes immobility, a condition not possible for many (Grzymala-Kazlowskaa & Phillimorea, 2018; Darling 2016). Additionally, the current policy framework and the governance system of migration and integration are excessively compartimentalised missing a nexus. Such a policy gap is common to many European and Middle Eastern countries and has negative implications for economic and social integration as it leads to informal labour, segregated and marginalised living, and decreased access to education and health.

The absence of integrated policies supporting migrants' and refugees' access to the city – in terms of the right to housing, jobs, and services (such as health, education and transport), generates an infrastructure of self-provision and self-organisation that intersects at times with humanitarian assistance, civil society action and activism, capitalizing on survival strategies dependent on a set of shifting tactical moves, flexible and innovative put in place to react to emerging and contingent relations of power and space in the city. From the squats in Athens, to the Jungle camp in Calais, the occupied buildings in Berlin and Rome, the so-called "informal tented settlements" of Lebanon, migrants and refugees make the most of the 'kinetic' city (Mehrotra, 2011), learning to read its many possibilities, improvising in its under-regulated spaces, finding a way to turn its characteristic excess into opportunity. Evidence of practices that leverage migrants' and refugees' abilities to negotiate access and to promote urban alliances and reduce competition and discrimination in the housing and job market are well documented (Bradley, Milner, Peruniak, 2019, Fawaz et al. 2018; Scholten et a, 2017; Baggerman et a, 2017; Dicker, 2017; Easton-Calabria, 2017).

The diverse ways in which refugees and migrants have become the solutions to the problem of displacement keep growing in the absence – or despite the presence – of formal humanitarian providers and state intervention. Whether these experiences can properly tackle migrants', refugees' and hosts' needs and to achieve the objectives of social recognition and public solidarity is yet to be fully understood. While there is recognition around the empirical and normative significance of refugees' and migrants' engagement as agents in the process, critiques of self-reliance programmes argue that they become tools to reduce aid and de-responsibilise actors (Krause et al, 2017).

In this sense, 'the ideal of self-reliance, and the language of resilient livelihoods,

create a framework that fits very well with neoliberal models of governance' (Carpi, 2017:18). Another critique questions whether self-reliance is a strategy to improve livelihoods, or rather to maintain host stability. In this sense, self-reliance becomes a form-of agency manufactured to build the appearance of integration in the case of protracted displacement. Most programmes tend to focus on self-reliance as an individual pursuit and on jobs as an end goal. Hence, they do not build capacity nor community wellbeing.

However, undoubtedly, these experiences indicate a clear shift in responsibility and decision making. Cities are places where both migrants and non-migrants interact, be it through working, studying, living or raising their families or simply being present in the street. Cities are seen as sites of experiments, where new relations across difference are developed (Forde, 2019). While cities offer great opportunities for migrants and refugees, they are also faced with challenges in creating opportunities for liveability and recognition as proved by the emergent complex and multifaceted literature on urban humanitarianism (Fawaz, 2005; Campbell, 2016; Landau et all, 2016; Woodrow, 2017), and on hospitality and hostility (Berg and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2018; Gill, 2018, Knowles 2017, Rozakou, 2012). Stressing the role of local communities in developing a pathway to integration is alternatively presented as a way of re-imagining social integration away from abstract generalisations to "actively explore the potential to support the development, and maintenance, of welcoming communities and communities of welcome, whether [...] composed of citizens, new refugees, or established refugees" (Fiddian-Qamsiyeh, 2016); as well as a form of questionable state withdrawal consequent to national policy failures and lack of resources. As agents in migration policymaking, cities often claim they are neglected by national governments, particularly small and medium cities.

Too much debate on integration so far has focused only on macro-level policy making or meso-level implementation without consideration for the perspective of those who 'have to integrate' (Pace and Simsek, 2019) steering away from familiar dichotomies pertaining to humanitarian agency-based ethics or media discourse that see migrants and refugees either as heroically resistant underclass or as helpless victims of neoliberalism (Bose,2013). Refugees' and migrants' agency in integration is under examined, partly because available administrative data is not deemed sensitive to migrant situations, and diversity within the migrant population is not recognised or addressed (Platts-Fowler & Robinson 2015: 477). Research has also been criticised for failing to acknowledge the subjective nature of the integration process and for being insensitive to the views and opinions of refugees (Phillimore, 2012; Boccagni & Baldassar 2015; Grzymala-Kazlowskaa & Phillimorea, 2018). Within this debate, the need clearly emerges for local and

national policy to give voice to those who are the recipients and beneficiaries of the integration decision making process.

Reframing integration as inhabitation and focusing on the complex set of encounters (Amin, 2012; Fincher and Jacobs, 1998; Sandercock, 1998) that characterizes inhabitation from arrival to settlement enables us to address the mentioned policy gap in an innovative manner, situating individuals' aspirations and local decision making at the core of policy making and institution building.

Migrant women in the light of Covid-19

The number of women migrants globally an in Europe is on the rise. Over the last 25 years, there has been little concerted effort to incorporate gender into thinking about migration. Yet, understanding gender is critical in the migration context. In part because theory has traditionally emphasised the causes of migration over questions of who migrates, it has often failed to adequately address gender-specific migration experiences. Thus, it becomes difficult to explain, for example, the conditions under which women migrate, or the predominance of women in certain labour flows and not in others. We do not understand the circumstances that encourage women to become transnational migrants, to enter trafficking channels, or to seek refugee resettlement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a distinct impact on migrant women and girls, posing the risk of exacerbating pre-existing gender and other intersecting inequalities now and in the future. This crisis has now shone light on how migrant women, already experiencing marginalisation, are differentially and disproportionately affected by the pandemic, bearing in mind that there are specific regional and national dimensions. At the institutional level, organizations around the world and more particularly the European Union, are aware of this inequality and have warned about the urgent need to look at existing realities from gender perspectives and, at the same time, incorporate greater protection and assistance to more vulnerable populations in response plans.

Existing gender-based violence is exacerbated by labour and migration uncertainty, as well as social distancing. For many migrant women who do not have sufficient support networks in transit and destination countries, isolation with their aggressor is a potential danger. Lockdowns, border closures and heightened policing have trapped women in migration with perpetrators of

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) who are often using COVID-19 as a means of coercive control, isolating them and their children. Discrimination against migrants in services provision and women's inability to access them when and where they are available due to lockdowns has meant that women have been unable to get help, report violence, or access shelters, justice and other basic services. COVID-19 has been a harsh reminder of the life and death implications for women in migration trapped in abusive relationships and the importance of networks and support services.

Migrant women are often explicitly excluded from mainstream public services and support packages (where they exist), including access to health services, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and maternal health services. The exacerbation of this specific inequality is not only a matter of human rights but also of public health[1]. The exacerbation of inequalities also intersects with the Covid-19 related socio-economic crisis. According to the IOM's World Migration Report 2020[2], migrant women represent around 74% of the service industry worldwide, while in many cases experience job insecurity. During the COVID-19 outbreak, mobility and travel restrictions are jeopardizing the income of migrant women, particularly domestic workers. Furthermore, the impact of the employment crisis under COVID-19 disproportionately affects less protected population groups, such as women and migrants. Migrant women's overrepresentation in the informal sector with low skilled, low paid and precarious jobs has meant that they are taking the brunt of rising unemployment and have lower rates in employment reengagement. Due to the layoffs, there is a risk that their work permits will not be renewed, resulting in risk of deportation. There has also been an increased risk of abuse and exploitation by employers aware of the precarity of migrant women's situation. The resultant increase in homelessness, lack of basic food and toiletries (including basic dignity kits for women) have also become a major issue. Even though NGOs and informal networks have rolled out protection schemes, these are often a Band-Aid for what is a significant systemic problem. Even when the isolation from the health crisis ends, the economic consequences can expose women to sexual exploitation.

The closures of schools and the implementation of digital learning as an alternative in almost all countries has also exacerbated inequalities faced by migrant girls. Their precarious access to education, role in domestic labour when out of school and limited resources have disproportionately excluded them from remote learning. They are also less likely to return to school when and as they reopen.

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1   https://publications.iom.int/books/covid-19-and-women-migrant-workers-impacts-and-implications
2   https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf

COVID-19's escalation of inequalities experienced by migrant women also includes a socio-political shift towards anti-migrant policies and racist and xenophobic attitudes. Several countries are using the pandemic as an excuse for border closures and stricter border policies, while there has also been an erosion of the right to seek asylum, with several states citing health concerns to justify restrictions to the right to seek asylum. Refugees and migrants are drifting in boats not allowed to disembark, while others are being forced to return without consideration for the right to non-refoulment. Similarly, to other health crises such as the syphilis and the HIV/AIDS crisis, the COVID-19 response has led to blame, stigmatisation and violence against "others", who are portrayed as the vector of the disease, usually perceived as aliens to the local population. Therefore, women in migration have been framed as groups that should be controlled, placing them at greater risk when these discourses and narratives are used to tackle an infection. Racist and xenophobic narratives increasingly portray people on the move as a "threat" to public health. In the specific case of migrant women, this discrimination can have consequences such as the lack of adequate care in a medical centre and other healthcare settings that are directly related to being women (such as pregnancy care, or legal and psychosocial support due to gender based violence). Simultaneously, there has been a worrying reduction of civic space for migrant women to organise and be able to claim their rights.

Refugees and migrants in the cities

Migrants and asylum seekers arriving to Europe reside mostly in urban environments, except for Greece and to a lesser extent Italy. In all cases though, following an initial limited period, refugees are expected to reside in cities. The differences in planning systems and approaches across Europe is often viewed as an obstacle to the creation of any kind of European planning policy for asylum. So far, even an overview of the different national asylum systems and their relationship to urban planning is missing. In several countries, including Greece, absence of a cohesive housing policy, further impact upon the lack of sound strategies and concrete planning. Housing is allegedly one of the pillars of integration, and in real life a sine qua non, yet in Greece two years later from the announcement of a national Integration Strategy, integration is absent from the public sphere.

Systematic knowledge of how different national planning systems (or lack thereof) and cultures are related to the integration of refugees in local contexts, especially housing strategies for refugees and their impact on the individual integration in society in general are at the core of a needed analysis.

Supported by observations in most EU countries, planning and management of hosting refugees has been resulting mostly in a housing situation that is characterized by social and physical segregation. However, new approaches to segregation support the assumption that not only housing segregation needs to be considered but all domains which are relevant in everyday life likewise (van Ham & Tammaru, 2016). This leads to the conceptualization of local integration and urban planning that needs to go beyond the providence of housing for refugees and to a holistic plan for social integration in general and a reconsideration of the terminology of integration in general. The transition of forced migrants into the housing market facilitates their successful settlement and inclusion into other domains, such as the labour market and social networks. Yet, forced migrants face several restrictions and challenges when trying to access housing. While some forced migrants start in informal housing, sublets, and squats, others end up in government-organized transitional housing (from overcrowded shared accommodations to camps and detention). As a result, they may experience dispersal, assignment to localities, residential requirements, and local strategies to segregate forced migrants in certain areas. These processes limit their mobility and protract their path to housing (Kreichauf 2018). On top of that, forced migrants, like other vulnerable populations, are increasingly confronted with a shortage of affordable housing in prospering urban agglomerations. They find themselves directly competing with the local population in extremely tense markets where the competition is characterized and fostered by social tensions between low-income groups as well as racism and hostility towards forced migrants (Landau 2006, Adam et al. 2019).

How do local communities and policy and administrative bodies react to the forced migrants' housing challenges. To what extent do cities develop concepts to ease or deny forced migrants' integration into the housing market? The investigation of the role of cities in the Europeanization of asylum policies (the so-called Common European Asylum System/CEAS) demonstrates the leaking integration of cities in the discussion of integration of refugees, especially into the labour market. In Doomernik and Ardon (2018), the discrepancies between the local and national level about the hosting of refugees have been named as a reason for the inadequacy of contemporary planning approaches in Europe. International bibliography supports that the transition of forced migrants into the housing market is an important element of integration that eases their successful settlement and inclusion into other domains, such as the labour market and social networks (Adam et al. 2019, Ager & Strang 2008).

While the housing situation and challenges of forced migrants differ greatly between countries, localities and even within groups of forced migrants

(often depending on legal status, national background, gender, household size, economic resources, current events, etc.), a more global approach in understanding common trends as well as dissimilarities, their causes and consequences, may shed light on the specifics of both forced migrants' transition into the housing market as well as the current state of housing in urban centres. It becomes important to overcome national containers of analysis, and to focus on local developments from an international and comparative angle, studying the trajectories of forced migrants, their tactics and strategies in navigating housing markets, focusing on the location and quality of housing that forced migrants find: what are the conditions and standards of housing? what kind of housing do they find (rental, subsidized housing, ownership, private landlords, etc.) and where is it located?, as well as exploring how local communities and policy and administrative bodies react to the forced migrants' housing challenges, and to what extent do cities develop concepts to ease or deny forced migrants' integration into the housing market? Acknowledging the multiplicity of encounters embedded in the city, we move away from the problematic asymmetrical and colonial approach to migration suggested by words like 'integration' and 'hospitality' and even 'welcome', at least in the current dominant use.

Thessaloniki has developed an Integrated Action Plan for Integration of Refugees: "Integration and inclusion is a two-way process. While individual agency free of paternalism is key for successful inclusion, this does not insinuate that inclusion happens on its own. The current Action Plan supports that a proactive stance to facilitate to creation of pathways for inclusion; in particular, the focus should be on removing barriers, filling gaps, reforming Municipal structures to effectively respond to new realities on the ground and providing key assistance where needed. An important aspect of this pathway and process is supporting vulnerable groups in achieving self-reliance. While there are limitations to the mandate of the Municipality to intervene in key sectoral areas such as employment, health, education policies; there are key areas where supportive measures can bolster overall national and regional efforts. In this respect, the promotion of affordable housing in the City, creation of robust employability programmes for citizens and non-citizens alike, linking the private and public sector and supporting individuals through non-formal education activities are some of the central measures foreseen by the Action Plan." The Report demonstrates the differing integration paths of migrants based on accommodation they live in.

Those with own accommodation sought employment for integration. Those in housing schemes employment was low compared to these with own accommodation (self-reliance). However, 'The free services, such as food, clothing or the day centre for homeless offered by the Municipality and

NGOs, were used more by the self-accommodated households compared to the refugees and asylum-seekers in the accommodation scheme'. Thirteen municipalities in Greece are taking part in the Cities for Integration Network to cooperate in knowledge exchange, capacity-building, policy development and actions for refugee integration. The participating municipalities—Athens, Agios Dimitrios (Attica), Heraklion (Crete), Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Karditsa, Larissa, Levadon, Nea Philadelphia - Nea Chalkidona (Attica), Piraeus, Trikeon, Piraeus—are host to 12,434 asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection.

Once someone receives international protection in Greece, they are no longer entitled to reception services for asylum seekers, including accommodation. The transitional grace period was reduced significantly: Since March 2020, people can no longer stay in the reception system for six months after they were officially recognized as refugees -- they only have 30 days. Among the roughly 11,000 refugees who have been asked in June 2020 to leave the reception system are both people whose grace period expired recently and some who could stay long past their grace period. Theoretically, officially recognized refugees should have access to most of the social services that Greek nationals have. They are also allowed to work. But in practice, the transition out of the asylum reception system is incredibly difficult for many. The bureaucratic hurdles to receive state support are high, many refugees cannot yet communicate effectively in Greek, and many face discriminations in the job and housing market. They have a hard time paying for housing and finding an apartment or house. Particularly in a country severely hit by austerity measures and the crippling of its economy since the 2010 onwards EU memoranda.

Asylum, returns and pushbacks[3]

A major political subject in many European countries, the question on how to deal with the arrival of refugees in Europe remains highly controversial and has had a major impact on the rise of extremist far-right reactions and approaches. Surveys show that it is not the that the European citizens reject refugees in general but are not accepting the way the process of integration is organised (Connor, 2018). The European states are failing, in the opinion of many of their citizens, to ensure the integration of refugees, which in return led to the creation of a "crisis". The talk about the "refugee crisis" has proliferated and originated a broader narrative of scepticism about the European unification, and even more about liberal democracy. There is a

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3   Based on a text written by Angeliki Nikolopoulou, Atonry in Law

need to consider the instruments, policies, strategies and narratives in asylum planning for refugees in Europe.

Civil society has continuously advocated that the (long-time) coming reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), must be human-rights based and needs to enable the provision of appropriate status to third-country nationals seeking international protection, ensuring full respect for the principle of non-refoulement; a profound review of the Dublin system with a permanent division of responsibilities and procedural safeguards to protect asylum seekers from violations of their fundamental rights; establishing procedures to ensure the timely disembarkation of rescued persons from ships and the sharing of responsibilities for their admission to EU Member States, which should be facilitated by the European Commission; the use of sanctioning measures for those Member States that violate human rights and do not wish to participate in the shared allocation of responsibilities and, securing appropriate funds for integration measures and measures ensuring equal opportunities, while reducing investments in the militarization of borders and the deportation of people[4].

With the current political climate however, as well as the reactions-restrictions due to Covid-19 witnessed in several countries further restricting asylum procedures and maltreatment of asylum seekers, and the key objectives pursued by the Commission proposals being harmonisation, efficiency and tackling abuse of the system, it is likely that the reform will carry on the tradition of a punitive approach to secondary movements of asylum seekers, as well as the practice of harmful and ineffective application of the Dublin regulation.

The migration flows through Greece and the Western Balkans have highlighted serious faults within the European system of border management, and the time has come for the EU to put in place appropriate policies and practices to prevent the disintegration of the asylum system, and to mitigate the persistent insecurity facing refugees and migrants as they attempt to regulate their status. In Khlaifia v. Italy, the grand chamber of the ECHR made it clear that an equilibrium must be found between the absolute and effective protection of fundamental rights, which requires procedural guarantees, and efficient border control.

The EU law establishes rules and principles over Recognition of status

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4   It should also be noted that after the EU-Turkey non - agreement, the Court of Justice of the EU ruled that this is not an international agreement with a normative content per se, but a political agreement. If this is true, we cannot see why Greece has fully aligned its legislation (EU law) to the commitment of the agreement, establishing super-accelerated asylum procedures on the islands of eastern Aegean and focusing -more and more- on a detention model, aiming at rejecting people at the border and facilitating returns at any cost and in any manner.

in member states, but it also governs returns based mainly on the Dublin Regulation (among EU states) and the Returns Directive (to third countries). Both instruments, combined with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and the international and European acquis in human rights, set several minimum rules and safeguards so that returns are realized in accordance with the law and with full respect to the rights of persons transferred/returned. In addition, there is an established caselaw by European jurisdictions (and international mechanisms) which forbids pushbacks and Dublin transfers among EU members if procedural guarantees and rights are not respected in order to eliminate risks of refoulement and inhuman/degrading treatment upon transfer/return.

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The EU law establishes rules and principles over Recognition of status in member states, but it also governs returns based mainly on the Dublin Regulation (among EU states) and the Returns Directive (to third countries). Both instruments, combined with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and the international and European acquis in human rights, set several minimum rules and safeguards so that returns are realized in accordance with the law and with full respect to the rights of persons transferred/returned. In addition, there is an established caselaw by European jurisdictions (and international mechanisms) which forbids pushbacks and Dublin transfers among EU members if procedural guarantees and rights are not respected in order to eliminate risks of refoulement and inhuman/degrading treatment upon transfer/return.

Despite the abundant caselaw, unfortunately, pushbacks exist, and everyone is aware of them. Similarly, many member states continue the application of the Dublin Regulation issuing transfer decision of applicants/beneficiaries of international protection to member states which are known for not respecting applicants'/refugee rights, contrary to the EU acquis.

At the same time, there is no common practice or policy regarding transfers within the EU and EU organs and institutions refrain from taking action aiming at respecting the legislation on asylum and respect for human rights. As an example, the Commission in 2016 gave the green light for the reinstatement of Dublin returns to Greece, and keeps to this position, despite the continuous high number of arrivals and the authorities' inability to respect peoples' rights (mass detention, inhuman reception conditions, no integration policy).

Refusing refugees and migrants entry into a country's territory and/or pushing them back to neighbouring countries without providing them with the opportunity to lodge their asylum claim has become the regular modus operandi, both at the external and internal borders of the EU. While some governments have attempted to "legalise" these practices, they still remain a violation of fundamental rights, including the prohibition of refoulement under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the prohibition of collective expulsions under Article 4 Protocol 4 to the ECHR and Article 19 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR). Other Member States, Greece particularly, have not formalised these practices, but nonetheless use them as an integral part of their border management, thus creating a shadow asylum system where the basic legal principles applicable in other spheres are dispensed with. This shadow system exists not only in the borderlands, but deep in the territory as well.

While the Schengen acquis provides an opportunity to promote fundamental rights compliance, the Schengen Borders Code is interpreted and applied creatively, thus expanding the space for extra-legal activities conducted by the authorities. In practice this means that Article 13 of the Code, stating *"That surveillance* [carried out by the border guards] *shall be carried out in such a way as to prevent and discourage persons from circumventing the checks at border crossing points"*, is used to obscure the fact that pushbacks are a practice existing outside any legal procedure, and portray them as simple 'discouragement' of attempts at crossing the border and lodging an asylum claim. At the same time, Article 4 of the Code which clearly stipulates that Member States must comply with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, relevant international law and the 1951 Geneva Convention when applying Schengen rules is completely ignored.

There is no common practice or policy regarding transfers within the EU and EU organs and institutions refrain from taking action aiming at respecting the legislation on asylum and respect for human rights. As an example, in 2016, the Commission gave the green light for the reinstatement of Dublin returns to Greece, and keeps to this position, despite the continuous high number of arrivals and the authorities' inability to respect peoples' rights (mass detention, inhuman reception conditions, no integration policy).

In Greece, the sole competence lies with the Ministry of Migration Policy and Asylum (formerly the Ministry of Interior), while informal settlements of the newly arrived are dispersed all over the country. Sweeping operations recently occurred where undocumented migrants were arrested in the mainland, even when standing in the queues of soup kitchens in the city and push backs to Turkey ensued. In the Greek case, Frontex has also confirmed the occurrence of pushbacks of people arriving from Turkey on rubber boats over the Aegean Sea, conducted by the Coast Guard.

In Greece, the refugee camp is a segregated space next to the city, and its para-site status is extended by the fact that the undocumented/and those whose temporary papers lapsed live outside the borderline/fence of the refugee camp. In order to be able to apply for asylum, the people in the mainland are forced to wait to be arrested, the police then issue them with temporary documents, which expire soon as people wait to enter the camp or stay in the city in squats. Police practice is to raid the periphery of the camp, arresting the undocumented or those with lapsed documents who live in the porous in-between area of the camp, the city, and the shacks built around it, collect people, bus them either to detention centres and then to the border or straight to the border (a few days), to be then pushed back. Instances of police brutality have been documented in these cases as well.

The collapse of the system of international protection and the access to the right of asylum are evident as procedures are falling through, the right to life is violated when people are forced to get arrested in order to get registered with the police; are forced to reside as parasites next to the segregated spaces of refugee camps, stripped of juridical and political protection; are provided with temporary papers whose validity expires in a few days, as they are arrested and bussed around northern Greece like cattle, as they are moved to detention centres with no access to legal aid, and finally as they are pushed back illegally over the border.

In light of the fact that many instances of gun use against people on the move in both countries have been documented, a question related to the right to life must be raised. As Article 2 of the ECHR instructs, the duty of the State is

not only to refrain from the intentional and unlawful taking of life but also to take appropriate steps to safeguard the lives of those within its jurisdiction. The next questions which must be asked are - what happens to people who are returned based on the Dublin regulation, and whether Greece is a safe country.

While returns to the country which was the first point of entry are considered illegal when fulfilment of asylum (living conditions and social rights, social inclusion) in that country, i.e. Greece is not possible, they happen nonetheless - with no provision as to the legal status of the returned, nor about their livelihood. With the very real possibility of detention and pushbacks, the returns become something like long-distance pushbacks, another kind of refoulement.

Whereas there are similarities and differences between the countries, these policies and practices have to be seen within a European/EU context, within the common European asylum system and so-called "European acquis". Therefore, we can conclude that EU law establishes rules and principles over Recognition of status in member states, but it also governs returns based mainly on the Dublin Regulation (among EU states) and the Returns Directive (to third countries). Both instruments, combined with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and the international and European acquis in human rights, set a number of minimum rules and safeguards so that returns are realized in accordance with the law and with full respect to the rights of persons transferred/returned.

Additionally, there exists an established caselaw by European jurisdictions (and international mechanisms) which forbids pushbacks and Dublin transfers among EU members if procedural guarantees and rights are not respected in order to eliminate risks of refoulement and inhuman/degrading treatment upon transfer/return.

It should also be noted that after the EU-Turkey non - agreement, the Court of Justice of the EU ruled that this is not an international agreement with a normative content per se, but a political agreement. If this is true, it is difficult to envision a valid reason why Greece has fully aligned its legislation (EU law) to the commitment of the agreement, establishing super-accelerated asylum procedures on the islands of eastern Aegean and focusing -more and more- on a detention model, aiming at rejecting people at the border and facilitating returns at any cost and in any manner.

Returns: Returns to country of first origin illegal, when enactment of asylum (living conditions and social rights) is not possible.

According to ECRE, "A strong focus on inclusion in Europe, through rights, respect and regularisation is as important as getting asylum systems functioning. While "integration" is a national responsibility, there is a role for the EU: the review of the EU Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals is one opportunity; significant, ringfenced funding for inclusion in the next EU budget (MFF 2021-2027) is another. Key rights where the EU specifically could play a role include the right to work, which should include tackling labour market exploitation, and the right to housing for all to address the situations of destitution and homelessness. Addressing the humanitarian crises in Europe, which result from denial of the rights – to housing, to social assistance – of those on the move, would also play a role in addressing public fear related to asylum."[5]

At the same time UNHCR advocates vis a vis the EU for: "Secure status to be granted, with access to long-term residency in the EU; Increased funding for integration programmes; Legislation and policy adopted that promote long-term integration; Promote welcoming and inclusive societies."[6]

Under the New Pact on asylum and migration and in view of the 2020 Commission's Proposed Pact on Migration and Asylum[7] and the intention to cooperate with the Committee of the European Social Charter[8], which would ease integration and assist M/S in this direction, they will seek to address current challenges in migration through solidarity and integration. The incentive comes in a particularly important era ushered in by the Covid-19 pandemic, increased arrivals in the Mediterranean (again) and tension at the Greek-Turkish border leading to lack of access to asylum procedures, leaving refugees exposed to refoulement.

At the same time, the EU legal framework does not address integration of beneficiaries of IP in a sufficient manner, leaving the implementation of integration policies to the discretion of M/S. The absence of a systematized and coherent EU response to the question of integration has resulted in a serious downgrade on rights in certain states which have been condemned

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5   https://www.ecre.org/joint-statement-the-new-pact-on-asylum-and-migration-an-opportunity-seized-or-squandered/

6   https://www.unhcr.org/publications/euroseries/5e60d1847/unhcr-recommendations-european-commissions-proposed-pact-migration-asylum.html

7   https://rm.coe.int/letter-to-mr-margaritis-schinas-vice-president-for-promoting-our-europ/16809cdcb4

8   https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/press-releases/eesc-ready-team-european-commission-new-pact-migration-and-asylum

by the CJEU and the ECtHR for violating the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and the ECHR (and the European Social Charter). According to the caselaw of the European courts (and some domestic courts) Dublin transfers of applicants must not be realized not only if the country of destination experiences a dysfunctional asylum system but also post-recognition owing to a lack of integration policy exposing applicants/beneficiaries of IP are exposed to a situation of extreme material poverty that is incompatible with human dignity and amounts to inhuman/degrading treatment.

Thus, the recognition of status remains a dead letter if it is not accompanied by social rights and integration prospects. In this respect, legislative and other initiatives should seek to ensure humane and efficient asylum policies in line with the European acquis, considering that the granting of international protection status in EU Member States in practice usually leads to permanent settlement in the EU. The EU should seize this opportunity to develop common standards for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection, promote integration mechanisms also in the local level, since communities ensure a passage between early and long-term integration.

Existing legal cases and EU legislation demonstrate that asylum as it was designed under Dublin does not work. Asylum, according to the human rights approach, should not only be linked to the legal possibility of reception (once off, in or out, and returns to the first country of reception), yet also to realities of the possibility to integrate in society as well.

It is important to address the relation between asylum and integration, to provide viable and humane alternatives to existing gaps in asylum legal and institutional frameworks. We aim to address multiple challenges related to the asylum/integration nexus and the gap between national policies and local implementation that is common to many European countries; this gap has negative implications for economic and social inclusion of asylum seekers as it leads to exploitative labour, segregated and marginalised living, and decreased access to education and health.

We mobilise the definition of integration as an individual and a social process - hence inherently subjective and reversible - and a state resulting from the process (Bohning et al, 1995). At the same time, integration is about how people forge relationships to enhance connectedness with a place (Wessendorf 2018). Relations are not in place just because there is a need, it is rather about a mutual sense of being human. Refugees are a particular group of inhabitants which are characterized by specific social aspects, in particular the remaining uncertainty regarding their asylum status, their future position in society, the possibilities of return to their home country. The

question remains open in how far the social abilities of refugees to integrate society are based on their psychological well-being (Black, 2001) and how this is supported by urban planning practices and policies.

It is possible to reframe integration away from the current dominant, colonial and top-down paradigm, and instead conceptualise it as a relational practice constituted by multiple incremental and transformative formal and informal encounters between displaced people, places, institutions and services that are developed to endure and maintain life. Inclusion is ultimately the result of complex daily strategies of learning, navigating and governing the city. Such an understanding enables us to shift our focus onto the historical and present experiences of those who 'have to integrate', recognizing the centrality of 'refugees' own assessments to policy innovation.

This nexus becomes particularly important in the new era ushered in by the Covid-19 pandemic. The dramatic difference in Member State responses on asylum further illustrates the filter that national governments have been allowed to place on their protection regime and commitments amid the COVID-19 outbreak. Despite a vast body of EU laws that outlines the basic parameters for protection in good and bad days, individual asylum systems are still prone to falling sway to the siren call of domestic politics and agendas. It remains to be seen if the recent attempt by the European Union to try to assert more of a leadership role will work and its freshly published set of guidelines can revert the differentiation that kickstarted in the beginning of March 2020. Asylum seekers, often in an already vulnerable position, are the first to suffer from governments' willingness to ignore the need for flexibility and surge capacity in housing and case workers. It needs only a pandemic to rear its head to expose how short-sighted governments have been and how quickly lessons learned painfully just a handful of years ago have been forgotten. Large centres are a trademark of many reception systems across Europe and now prove a logistical nightmare to separate groups or quarantine potentially infected persons—with fears rampant among public-health and other officials that these could prove a tinderbox for widespread coronavirus outbreaks.

The implementation of EU asylum law within EU Member States is far from being qualified as (remains far from) homogenous due to the serious inconsistencies in the interpretation and implementation of the legislation on asylum rules and procedures and the reception obligations of MS towards asylum seekers. In this context and from a human rights' perspective (since asylum law and practice must be in conformity with international and EU human rights law), the practice of several states regarding transfers of asylum seekers based on Dublin Regulation has been severely criticized as opposing

EU law. In addition, according to well-established caselaw by the European jurisdictions (European Court of Human Rights, ECtHR, and the Court of Justice of the EU, CJEU), there is no presumption of safety as to the respect of human rights even within EU member states. Therefore, the mere ratification and/or adoption of legislation by a MS does not mean automatically that the latter respect their obligations towards asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection (IP); in fact, the practice of national authorities must also be in conformity with European and International Human Rights law.

Despite extensive evidence of the serious deficiencies in the asylum and/ or reception systems of certain countries, when it comes to the application of Dublin Regulation, it has been noticed that domestic authorities in most states have not set out policies to prevent transferring people (back) to those countries based on the Dublin rules, even when the destination countries face severe deficiencies in asylum/reception procedures, decision making or/and political situation entailing certain risks to the applicant. Such risks generally stem from the absence/inadequacy of reception facilities, poor living conditions, absence of special protection mechanisms and guarantees for vulnerable applicants, lack of effective access to asylum procedures, lengthy procedures, low recognition rates, generalized practice of administrative detention, pushbacks etc.

According to the case law of the ECtHR and the CJEU, transfers of individuals should not take place under the above circumstances, given the risk of refoulement and/or exposure to inhuman and/or degrading treatment contrary to the European Convention and Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. In particular, the authorities of the sending member state and -in case of litigation- national courts, have an obligation to ensure that the treatment of asylum seekers in the receiving member state follows the obligations deriving from European and International law to prevent possible risk of inhuman or degrading treatment. Even in the absence of systemic deficiencies in the country of transfer, the authorities (and courts) of the sending state must consider individual circumstances and take all the necessary actions to eliminate risks that could lead to a deterioration of applicants' health.

For the Courts, a country's (chronic) problems in asylum procedures, obstacles in access to asylum, lack of information on rights and procedures, absence of (access to) legal aid and interpretation, lengthy delays in the procedure, no effective remedy to challenge negative asylum decisions, lack of quality of asylum procedures, low recognition rates and pushbacks at the border without a chance to lodge an asylum claim, amount to a risk of refoulement. Also, the lack/inadequacy of reception conditions, the absence of a monthly

allowance and access to the labour market in the destination country, as a result of which applicants live in absolute poverty/extreme material poverty and prolonged uncertainty and insecurity without covering even basic needs, are considered as an exposure to inhuman/degrading treatment. On certain occasions, the ECtHR has created a special obligation for the States to provide assurances well in advance of the transfer for ensuring full compliance with HR obligations otherwise the transfer cannot take place.

Recently the above jurisprudence has been extended to asylum seekers who have obtained international protection in another EU member state (MS) but left the country of recognition due to the lack or inadequate integration policies and reapply for asylum in other EU states which offer better reception and integration policies. According to the CJEU an applicant may not be transferred to the MS of recognition, if the living conditions in that state would expose them to a situation of extreme material poverty amounting to inhuman or degrading treatment namely when he cannot meet his most basic needs, such as food, personal hygiene and a place to live, and that undermines his physical or mental health or puts him in a state of degradation incompatible with human dignity. The requirement for human dignity can be found also in the caselaw of the Commission of the European Social Charter which has recognized several social rights to asylum seekers and migrants in European states. In this line, some domestic courts have suspended transfers of recognized beneficiaries of International Protection, although disparities exist in caselaw.

Except of disparities in domestic caselaw, there is no common policy on transfers by MS or at the EU level, which means that many Member States ignore the above and continue applying the Dublin Regulation and issuing transfer decisions to countries with already problematic asylum systems, knowing that they will probably not be executed. Also, assurances given by some MS as to the treatment of persons upon transfer are vague and may not be followed. Finally, as a flagrant example of the dysfunction of the EU asylum system, the European Commission has not made recommendations to member states for a suspension of transfers to countries in which there is a risk of violation of rights, even for countries like Hungary or Bulgaria against which infringements procedures have been launched. In addition, the Commission has recommended the reinstatement of transfers to Greece since 2016 -and has not changed this position- despite the considerably high number of asylum applicants received and the limited capacity of the authorities to respond to the needs in a proper and timely manner with respect to human rights. And although the reception capacity falls short of needs, with asylum seekers and status holders facing risks of homelessness and destitution, especially in the reception and identification centres on the

islands. Since 2017 there has been a sharp increase in incoming requests for transfer by other member states, but still a very low number of transfers have been realized.

The above situation results in waste of resources, time and bureaucracy while keeping peoples' rights and lives on hold in prolonged uncertainty. The case law is complete: the courts have ruled. There is thus an urgency for policy makers and civil society to discuss and find ways to implement the acquis and link effectively asylum + reception + social policies.

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"Do the Roma want to integrate?": European framework, Greek policies and new instruments.

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Among other things, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the foreground the acknowledgment that no one can consider themselves safe unless everyone is safe. Preserving the safety and prosperity of our own space and at the same time coming to terms with the fact that a little further away there prevail poor living conditions and inadequate access to elementary goods, such as water, creates a "precarious safety" - if we can use this contradiction. If the next day of the crisis is already here and the predictions for society as a whole, for employment and the economy in general, are negative, how can we approach the challenges for the more vulnerable groups, such as the Roma?

It is often said that the virus does not discriminate, as it can infect celebrities and non-celebrities alike, rich and poor. Indeed, discrimination begins *after* someone has already been infected, or after being called upon to function and adapt to new conditions. Not everyone has the same access to health services, decent living conditions, the opportunity for social distancing, teleworking and e-learning. Those living in poor housing conditions and in isolated makeshift camps are more vulnerable to the conditions of the pandemic. In several parts of Greece, even in Attica itself, there is still insufficient access to electricity and clean water. The participation of children from Roma communities in the educational structures is the lowest in Europe, but even when they do participate, it is usually *as if* they are present, as the school itself ignores their particular needs. The forced ousting of the Roma to informal forms of marginalized labor is an additional exclusion factor when

the state subsidizes the afflicted, while hate speech – "anti-gypsyism" - is lurking, ready to become hegemonic on the first possible occasion.

This text aims to present the efforts of European organizations, such as the Council of Europe, for the integration of the Roma, with an emphasis on Greece. These efforts change the framework of integration, and emphasize the empowerment of groups, using mainly the tool of mediation. The second section focuses on key challenges observed in relation to the integration of the Roma in Greece, especially in the areas of housing and education, while we also describe more specifically the intervention of programs such as that of JUSTROM for the access of Roma women to justice.

European efforts to integrate the Roma

With a population in Europe of about ten million, and with a historic presence on the Old Continent that began more than ten centuries ago, the Roma are the most numerous groups with minority characteristics (Council of Europe, n.d.)[1]. Despite their long history and significant number, in most cases there are still great inequalities in the allocation of resources, services and opportunities, always to their detriment. Their access to adequate housing, employment, education and health is still a pan-European challenge, as is their relationship with the state and its services, while the wide-spread anti-gypsyism often acquires an institutional character.

However, it is only in the last decades that the European countries and the institutions of the European Union started to concern themselves with the problems of the Roma and the consequences of the long-term exclusion of their communities, and to do so with an increasing interest. The first major starting point was the fall of the so-called "existing socialism" and, along with this, the fall of the political wall that divided the continent. Then, the enlargement of the EU so as to include the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe prompted an increasing interest, mainly due to the choice of a large number of Roma people to emigrate to Western Europe, taking advantage of the free movement and thus leaving the countries in which the exclusion against them in the past had taken institutional and extreme forms (Council of Europe: Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012).

The Council of Europe only began in 1996, 45 years after it was founded, the first efforts to collaborate with Eastern European countries for the purpose

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1   Especially for the presence of the Roma in the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans see Marushiakova E. and Vesselin P. (2001). *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire. A contribution to the history of the Balkans*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press; Paris: Centre de recherches tsiganes.

of designing and implementing Roma inclusion policies in its democratic processes and the allocation of resources. The lack of policy even on the part of international organizations is reflected in the lack of knowledge and institutional research. It was not until 2002 that the UNHCR published the first extensive survey on the living conditions of the Roma in Europe, and this concerned only five countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia). The survey emphasized the Roma's disposition to *integrate*, rather than *assimilate*, and it suggested the replacement of dependency policies through benefits with policies aiming at integration and availability of employment opportunities, equal access to education and civic participation, especially on a local level. At the same time, a number of deficiencies were identified, such as in adequate statistics for policy planning, in integration related solutions that would link, for example, actions for accessing health, work and education by enhancing the abilities of the Roma, as well as deficiencies in the promotion of local solutions that would be in the interest of both the Roma and the majority population (UNDP, 2013, p. 2).

In its conclusion, the report recognized the need to adopt an *integrated approach* and to link the protection of human rights with integration and local development. The same conclusion was reached by the World Bank's 2005 report entitled *Roma in an expanding Europe: Breaking the poverty cycle*, which proposed that emphasis should be given to integration policies that would go beyond the exclusively rights-related approach - dominant in the 1990s-, adding to it the need for tackling the economic and social obstacles faced by the Roma in order to have access to their rights.

In February 2005 and on the basis of these reports, eight EU Member States (twelve later) signed the *Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015*. This was nothing more than a political commitment to improving the social and economic facts of the Roma and strengthening their integration into their countries. In June 2009, there followed the adoption by the European Parliament of ten basic principles for Roma integration. These include the adoption of pragmatic policies that will not entail discrimination, the specific -but not exclusive- aiming of these policies towards the integration of the Roma, in order to avoid their being targeted any further, the intercultural as well as the gender dimensions of state policies, and the connection of policies with education, employment, health and housing. In addition, there was given emphasis to the need for policies to be designed with the participation of the local and regional authorities, of the civil society and, of course, the active participation of the Roma themselves, which is not at all self-evident as yet (European Commission, 2010).

In September 2010, on behalf of the European Commission, the Roma Task

Force began the evaluation of the Roma integration policies implemented by the Member States with European funds. The report ascertained that the measures adopted were not sufficient to effectively address the social and economic problems of a large portion of the Roma populations. According to the Commission, despite the improvements in the legislation of several EU Member States, little had changed in practice and in the daily experience of the populations themselves. Their social and economic problems remained at the core of their exclusion and marginalization[2].

On this basis, the European Commission called on Member States to adopt the Framework for the National Strategies of Roma Integration, as it considered that the general policies to fight racism were not sufficient in themselves to combat the social exclusion of the Roma and the phenomenon of anti-gypsyism. It thus placed at the centre of attention the need to strengthen the relations of local governments with the Roma communities, with the purpose of reducing exclusion. The cooperation among school and intercultural mediators, local Roma associations, institutions and associations, but also the active participation of Roma parents themselves in educational issues, as well as the provision of teachers with information on intercultural issues, were set as key priorities. The cooperation among school and intercultural mediators, local Roma associations, institutions and associations, but also the active participation of Roma parents themselves in educational issues, as well as the provision of teachers with information on intercultural issues, were set as key priorities. Thus, in April 2011, the European Commission adopted a European Framework for the National Strategies related to the integration of the Roma into the Member States. On the basis of this framework the Member States, with Greece among them, developed strategies the main goal of which was the strengthening of the local and regional authorities for the purpose of realizing the Roma integration and implementing anti-discrimination policies.

Based on the above, the EU's development strategy for 2020 aimed clearly at the integration of the Roma. According to the strategy, the actions must describe specific measures both locally and regionally, in order to improve the situation of the communities. The strategies must be part of a framework that combines the protection of Fundamental Rights with development. The focal point here is to ensure the direct involvement of local communities, including the Roma. Trust building, social cohesion, and combating prejudice and discrimination were set as the basic principles (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) & United Nations Programme for Development

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2   Section 2 at COM(2011) 173 final. Brussels, 5.4.2011. A*n EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020* [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions]. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173&from=en

(UNDP), 2012, p. 9).

In 2015, violations of the fundamental rights of Roma in Europe made the headlines, thus clearly showing that integration policies were still ineffective. The evictions in France and Bulgaria sparked developments, and the European institutions put more pressure on Member States to implement national strategies for the Roma integration. Even greater emphasis was given to the development of actions at the local level, as well as to the creation of monitoring mechanisms (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2016). In the same period, as it is reflected in a 2016 FRA report (p. 99), a Eurobarometer survey on discrimination showed that national/ethnic origin remains the most important discrimination factor in Europe. For the Roma in particular, the results of the research showed that anti-gypsyism remains notably widespread. When asked if they would feel comfortable working with someone from a minority group, only 63% of the participants answered positively to working with Roma, while a much larger percentage of the respondents were positive to the possibility of working with sub-Saharan Africans (83%) and with those coming from Asia (94%). Even lower was the percentage of those who would start a family with a person of Romani origin (45% positive answers). Also, only 18% of the respondents had a Gypsy friend or even acquaintance, which shows the social isolation of the Romanian community.

Roma and the Greek state: Challenges and nonperformance

In Greece, one of the first problems that arises in the effort to approach the Roma issue and in the development of inclusion policies is the recording of the population and the communities, since the existing data can hardly be considered reliable. At times, there appear numbers that start from just a few tens of thousands and go up to 300,000. For the official authorities, their population reaches only 52,000 (Lydaki, 2013, p. 14) - a number that has risen to just over 100,000 after the recent efforts for an indicative recording in the period 2016-2019. European organizations acknowledge that this is a population that reaches the 200,000 in Greece, which means that they make up about 2% of the Greek population or, in other words, the historically most numerous ethno-cultural group with a mother tongue other than Greek. In fact, the only thing proved by the official records is that there is a lack of access and contact between public services and the communities of the Greek Roma - let alone those who come from other countries. A simple discussion with people from the local Roma communities is enough to convince someone that the recording of the specific population leaves a significant part of it out.

The next big problem that arises in the efforts to approach the issue is a widespread fear of *minoritization*. This fear is observed both among the institutional bodies and the representatives of the Roma community. The international predominance of the term 'Roma' in 1971 as a commonly accepted term, the recognition of the Roma as a "European Minority" by the Council of Europe and other international bodies (Council of Europe: Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012), but also the tendency to officially recognize them as an ethnic or national minority in a number of European states[3] –most recently in Albania in 2017 - have created a defensive attitude in Greece. This fear creates obstacles in the planning of policies with a special regard for the Roma, because of the apprehension of their being recognized as a group with specific ethnocultural characteristics; what is more, a fear that often leads to the attempt to replace the term 'Roma' with that of the 'Tsinganoi', which is considered more Greek.

Of course, on the one hand, the term Roma is a self-identification in the Romani language spoken by the majority of Greek Roma, while, on the other it is also the term used in Greek official texts. Besides, neither the recognition of cultural differentiation and of special needs, nor the claim of a particular Roma identity necessarily point to a minority, especially in times of "identity politics" and of a mass movement of populations to Europe. The issue of minority is also not raised by the community as such - in any form of the latter's representation. The issue most probably reflects a fear that exists in Greece for any minority debate, rather than showing some trend. As a matter of fact, in the European context the term 'minority' does not bear the same load it bears in Greece, as it often refers only to linguistic, cultural or other numerical *minorities* (for example in Great Britain the minority parliament - as a minority government).

Greece first adopted a National Strategy Framework for the Roma in 2011, following the EU's guidelines. The description of Roma includes "all the Tsinganoi-Rom communities of Greek citizenship, as well as those of the Roma who hold the citizenship of another Member State of the EU and live and reside legally on Greek territory" -leaving out the Roma from third countries. The Framework describes the Roma exclusively as a "social group", ignoring the ethnocultural dimension of their exclusion. It acknowledges that this social group suffers from "multiple social exclusion in the areas of housing, employment, health and education", but it does not make reference to the

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3   From a legal point of view, the Roma were not treated as an ethnic or national minority until the early 1990s. Within a decade, until 2002, they were legally recognized in many countries, including Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Northern Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and Ukraine. They have no recognized status in Greece, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Switzerland. Parliament Assembly. (April 19, 2002). *Legal situation of the Roma in Europe* (Doc. 9397 revised). Retrieved June 1, 2020, from http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=9676&lang=EN

widespread anti-gypsyism as a central barrier to integration and as a source of discrimination (Greek Ministry of Employment, Social Security and Welfare, 2011, p. 3). On this basis, the Framework aims primarily at their *"substantial and practical socialization"* (emphasis on the original), the "removal of the conditions of social exclusion" and the creation of the conditions for their social inclusion. According to the National Strategy Framework for Roma (2011, p. 7), this was to be done through the securing and guaranteeing "housing", the development of a supportive network of social intervention in the areas of employment, education, health and social inclusion, but also through the social emancipation and participation of the Roma themselves. Despite the fact that the Framework had set 2020 as a time limit for the promotion of the above objectives - that is, the year we are in - the results are less than meagre. The very general and abstract goals the Framework sets, combined with the fears we described above, may be just some of the factors behind its failure - or at least the inability to assess any of his successes.

The categorization of the main problems faced by the Roma according to the existing national Framework focuses on four pillars: housing, education, employment/unemployment, access to health. Of course, these problems do not constitute a Greek peculiarity, but they more or less concern the Roma in all the European countries[4]. This categorization, however, leaves out a particularly important dimension: the relationship with the state and its institutions, and especially issues regarding the urban-municipal situation and statelessness, which preoccupy several thousand Greek Roma.

The institutional relationship with the Greek state: Urban-municipal status and Citizenship

Part of the explanation for the extreme exclusion being suffered by many communities of the Greek Roma, but also an indication of the all-time resistances of the administration, is the fact that until 1955 there was no central integration policy. Until then, at the level of the central state-institutions, the legal framework that regulated the citizenship issues of the (Greek) Roma was Law 4310 of 1929 with the eloquent title, "On the settlement and movement of foreigners in Greece, passport control by the police, deportations and displacements." Either if they were in Greece before 1830, living in areas that were gradually integrated into the Greek state, or came after 1922, as refugees and/or exchanged populations, it was only in 1955 that a legislative decree did recognize the Roma as Greek citizens. The efforts to determine their

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4   *Roma data*. (n.d.). UNDP in Europe and Central Asia. Retrieved May 26, 2020, from https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/ourwork/sustainable-development/development-planning-and-inclusive-sustainable-growth/roma-in-central-and-southeast-europe/roma-data.html

citizenship culminated in 1978-1979, when the government of Konstantinos Karamanlis proceeded to a massive granting of citizenship and registered the undeclared Roma in Greece (Trumpeta, 2008). However, due to the social exclusion and, in many cases, extreme marginalization, not all the Roma were registered, and a percentage of them remained stateless. Today, the children and grandchildren of those who were not included in the mass naturalization cannot be registered in the municipal registers, while for others the citizenship remains administratively undetermined.

The combination of the two problems, that is, urban-municipal status and statelessness, constitutes an unsolved administrative puzzle so far, and the efforts to solve it are minimal. Of course, this has immense consequences for people's lives, the number of which has not been ascertained - it probably concerns some thousands, located in the southern parts of Greece. Especially for those who are trying to be included in the municipal registries and administratively record their birth, the obstacles are innumerable. The administration knows neither the problem nor the solutions, often a costly court may be required, the victims are illiterate and completely marginalized, while, even if they manage to overcome all obstacles, the result remains uncertain[5].

The problem has been posed to Greek governments, both by institutional bodies, such as the Greek Ombudsman (2009), and by international organizations such as the Council of Europe through programs they implement in Greece (such as the JUSTROM). Article 46 of Law 4604, passed in 2019, came to solve part of the problem as it provides for special procedures for the granting of citizenship, with a specific provision so as the law would not be exploited by foreign Roma who are non-citizens. However, the provision was repealed in March 2020 - before it was even implemented - and the stateless Roma (Greeks and non-Greeks) are now being referred to the naturalization process that is followed for second generation of immigrants.

The Council of Europe and the European Committee of Social Rights have repeatedly stressed the fact that states have an obligation to identify the magnitude of the problem, but also to adopt measures to address it. It is an issue of fundamental rights for those who are in a state of statelessness, but also one related to social peace and to the protection of the majority from people who are institutionally invisible.

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5   Along with Alexandra Karagianni, we had chronicled an indicative story in an article for the e-magazine 'Vice': *"The story of the Greek Roma whose child was taken from her because she didn't have papers"* ("Η ιστορία της Ελληνίδας Ρομά που της πήραν το παιδί επειδή δεν είχε χαρτιά"). Retrieved June 6, 2020, from https://www.vice.com/gr/article/3k99kj/h-istoria-ths-ellhnidas-roma-poy-ths-phran-to-paidi-epeidh-den-eixe-xartia

The problem of housing

Housing has been considered to be one of the most important and chronic problems faced by the Roma, not only in Greece but throughout Europe, with multiple consequences for other key aspects of their lives. Access to adequate housing has been set as a fundamental condition for social inclusion by international and European organizations. The UN Commission on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has stressed that "the right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the shelter provided by merely having a roof over one's head or which views shelter exclusively as a commodity. Rather, it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity" (Council of Europe: Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012, p. 138).

According to a 2010 FRA report, in most EU countries, the housing isolation of the Roma is a reality, accompanied by very poor living conditions. The 2017 report states that 41% of Roma in Europe experienced negative discrimination in trying to buy or rent a home over a period of 5 years. Housing and employment are referred to as the issues where the Roma experience the greatest exclusion and negative discrimination. It is estimated that 30% of the Roma in Europe live in a place without drinking water, while 46% do not have a toilet, shower or bath in the house (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2017, p. 110)[6]. Of course, these conditions are not a matter of choice. As the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights has pointed out, the negative discrimination against Roma in terms of access to housing is taking different forms: not only a refusal to rent or sometimes sell them a house, but also a favorable treatment of non-Roma in infrastructure development, a systematic refusal to build infrastructures in the areas where the Roma live, a racist tolerance of the existence of wretched housing conditions, etc. In addition, the Roma may be indirectly discriminated against when there are made decisions for evictions, fines for illegal construction and other sanctions (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2013, pp. 138-139).

In Greece, Lydaki's research in the late 1990s showed that when municipalities were informed that Roma were trying to buy land for housing, they would designate the area as a "green space" to prevent permanent residence. In addition, they chose to demolish houses without a building permit only for the case of the Roma and not for the rest of the residents (Lydaki, 1997, pp. 27-28).

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6   The research concerns Romania, Spain, Great Britain, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Slovakia.

It was around the same period when, following four judgments of the European Committee of Social Rights against Greece - and ahead of the Olympics - the government of that time developed a particularly ambitious housing plan, which remained largely on paper. This provided for the creation of temporary and permanent accommodation with transportable buildings, projects to improve living conditions in settlements, subsidized trailers, the creation of special support centers in the settlements that would function as counseling centres. The implementation of a housing policy for the Greek Roma was considered a basic precondition for social inclusion and the fight against social exclusion. This direction would be accompanied - according to the plan - by supportive actions, such as training, education, employment promotion, and others. According to the evaluation of the actions, the main causes of the plan's failure were the organizational weaknesses of a program "that never acquired Operating Structure, infrastructure, an implementation and monitoring mechanism, and, above all, a single centre for action coordination", as well as the occasional allocation of resources, the gradual downgrading of interventions, and the choice of a vertical thematic approach discrimination (Greek Ministry of Employment, Social Security and Welfare, 2011)[7].

However, while the Action Framework of 2011-2020 identified the above errors and omissions in the actions of the previous period, and particularly so in the field of housing rehabilitation, it did not revise any of them (Baltsiotis, 2015). Thus, in practice, it was only the housing program for the Greek Roma that was implemented. There were given housing loans with the guarantee of the Greek state to a few thousand beneficiaries. The program, however, became synonymous with corruption and waste of money with very little impact. The terms and criteria, how many and who benefited and whether they actually managed to repay the loans are not very clear until today. According to witnessing, most of the time, those who benefited were persons who already had access to networks of patronage, while a lot of money was wasted either on intermediaries or on people who did not have a housing problem. In the long run, whichever housing rehabilitation actually took place caused more problems due to inability of paying the installments, especially after the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2010. Today, in 2020, several beneficiaries of these programs are subject to the primary residence protection, in order not to have their houses put up for auction due to debts.

In the period 2017-2019, there was developed another plan for the relocation of makeshift camps, in which living conditions are miserable. The program

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7   Thus, many people still live in the containers they moved to at that period, in some areas these were not even installed (see Chalastra in the Thessaloniki area), while in other cases of rent subsidy (e.g., Gerakas Attikis) people returned to their makeshift camps when the programs were completed..

was designed by the Special Secretariat for the Social Integration of Roma -established in 2016 and abolished in 2019- after listing the settlements throughout Greece and classifying them as "good", "moderate" and "bad". The first planned relocations were canceled in 2019, after mainly local reactions, with the result being that the program has not yet been implemented.

But what does "right to housing for the Roma in Greece" mean in practice today? Is it a matter of social inclusion or also of human rights? This demand found an exemplary application in a policy that can be summed up in the phrase "money to the Roma to build a house, to become like us". Even if the money eventually reached a very small number of beneficiaries and was wasted on intermediaries, the housing loan for "normal homes", that is, apartments in the standards of the post-war petite bourgeois housing norm, became the only policy for the promotion of the right to housing. It may still be this what one understands when discussing Roma housing issues in Greece; money to the Roma, or houses (by the state) for the Roma.

In housing issues, we often see a logic that has been observed in the past in other countries as well; it is the way of life of the Roma that is considered responsible for their social exclusion. As in post-war Britain, so in Greece today, we often think that if we make sure that the excluded would live in an apartment like the rest of the population, then the issues of Roma inclusion, their access to education and employment would automatically be resolved. When this does not happen, we consider that it is their responsibility, we doubt their own will to integrate and blame their own way of life (Taylor, 2018, p. 140).

The discussion on housing problem of the Roma should raise the issues such as the forced evictions, the solution of the problems of irregular settlements (e.g., Perea in Thessaloniki, Chalandri in Attica and Drosero in Xanthi), the improvement of living conditions and hygiene, and also the improvement of the infrastructure in existing places of residence. Moreover, this discussion should not concern only the Roma, because it would target them them further. It must include the local communities as a whole and persuade municipal and regional authorities to use a language and a political practice of inclusion that will involve Roma and non-Roma people. Since the central government cannot force the local authorities to act on the issue, it must give them incentives to devise policies that will concern the entire local populations. Of course, this means the involvement of entire local communities, the participation of the majority, the granting of actual role and voice in developing inclusive policies for all (Sobotka & Vermeersch, 2012, p. 814). This discussion can be enriched if it takes into consideration the refugee related experience and the implementation of the massive program 'ESTIA' (House), which has

clearly shown that housing is not enough to integrate a population if it is not accompanied by other additional dimensions.

Education and assimilation

This text is not the appropriate space to develop the problems and policies regarding the other pillars of the issues under discussion. However, similar ineffectiveness and the lack of recognition of the particular needs of Roma communities are also observed in other areas, such as education.

Research has shown that in some EU Member States, including Greece, only a small number of Roma students manage to complete primary education (Open Society Institute, 2008). The school attendance of Roma children is often fragmentary, many students drop out of school early in order to supplement their family's income or because of their being bullied by their classmates, while in other cases the enrollment of children takes place at an age that is older than the one expected by law. The lack of provision for the integration of Roma children in the school system, but also the non-adaptation of the school system to the needs of these children (e.g., with intercultural teacher training, remedial tutoring or the inclusion of the Romani language as part of the teaching), exacerbates the problem. Finally, experience from the field has shown too many cases where even when adults want to continue their education in second-chance schools, the structural weaknesses of the latter create obstacles and disincentives to the continuance of their education.

According to a 2013 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) survey (p, 12), Greece, Bulgaria and Romania are the countries with the lowest Roma school attendance in compulsory education. In most European countries, 90% of Roma children attend compulsory education, while this drops to 15% for the non-compulsory education (post junior high school). According to the same report, Greece has the highest school dropout rate for Roma children in EU countries, reaching 40% (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2013, pp. 13-14). As Chronaki concludes in her research among students, "both the processes of normalizing the non-use of their own language, within which gypsy children become speechless, and the choice of the state to be indifferent to the bilingualism of these children […] constitute part of the problem and of the impossibility of equal participation of Roma children in education" (Chronaki, 2013, p. 120).

Thus, the mere goal of the "increase in the number of Roma children enrolling in and attending compulsory education, acquiring the relevant knowledge",

as the Action Framework (p. 8) points out, is a general and vague goal, which could only be effective through the linguistic assimilation of the pupils. In other words, linguistic assimilation is ultimately the only "integration" perspective of the state -and the only choice of Roma pupils- in order for them to successfully participate in the educational system. This is also evident from numerous empirical recordings, where social workers, teachers and other institutional bodies call on parents to speak Greek at home -and not their mother tongue, Romani- so that their children can be integrated in the school; an exemplary depiction of the assimilative logic that continues to tacitly govern the Greek educational system and other involved agencies.

Mediation as a step towards integration

Since 2011, European institutions have been promoting mediation between Roma communities and local authorities, in an effort to promote the European idea of integration as a process at the local level, but also to bypass national governments both in terms of decision-making as well as the management of financing, since their performance in previous years was considered to be meagre. This goal was also affirmed by the European Roma Summit, which took place in 2014, further paving the way for initiatives on a local level and formulating the demand for bypassing national authorities (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2016, p. 102).

Mediation is connected with a more general effort to reconsider the traditional approach to relations between majorities and ethno-cultural minorities, which focuses on the concept of *empowerment*. If in previous decades the emphasis was on protecting these groups and their rights, the effort now is to strengthen the claims of the group itself and their access to services and rights. An effort, that is, for the members of the group itself to acquire their own voice, without relying on either self-appointed patrons or self-appointed leaders (the so-called "gypsy fathers"). Protection policies are now seen as intensifying the group's dependence and its treatment as a voiceless object. On the other hand, approaches that speak of the "management of otherness" reproduce integration rationales from top to bottom and reflect the side of the majority and dominant groups, since the management is done by the one who holds power.

The "empowerment" of ethno-cultural minorities presupposes the transfer of power in order for their members to claim their rights and to actively participate in the planning and implementation of policies concerning them. What is attempted with this change of perspective is for the excluded groups

to become active agents and gain knowledge and power (Prina, 2014, pp. 1-2). The empowerment of the groups is seen as something that can be achieved through a more active participation on their part and through a combination of sharing power and responsibilities, on the one hand, and of the existence of institutions that will ensure the effective implementation of targeted policies, on the other. Of course, this presupposes the reshaping of policy-making at the local level towards directions that create favorable conditions for their participation and the acceptance of their demands (Penasa, 2014, p. 3).

The practice of 'mediation' began to be recognized as a tool for Roma integration into Europe in the mid-1980s. The first attempts to use this tool in order to promote the better integration of Roma children in school education began in the early 1990s. In the last two decades, the practice of mediation has acquired a new dynamic and new functions, as a result of both the changes in Western societies that were brought about by immigration and interculturalism, as well as the growing economic inequalities. In Greece, since the mid-1990s, the General Secretariat of Popular Education, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, approached the issue of mediation by means of organizing some seminars. However, unlike other European countries, there had been no large-scale initiatives on a national level until 2011, when the ROMED (ROma MEDiation) program of the Council of Europe began.

This program was implemented in the periods 2011-2012 and 2014-2017 and concerned the training and availability in the field of Roma mediators (1st phase), as well as their support by local teams which would be in consultation with local authorities (2nd phase). By setting goals such as reinforcing the trust between local Roma communities and authorities, problem solving and increasing access to social services in communities, almost 100 Roma mediators were initially trained in Greece, with a consequential emphasis on 8 geographical areas so as for small groups to claim a solution to local problems under the mediator's guidance.

The basic idea of mediation sees the Roma mediators to be as neutral actors as possible between the two sides -communities of Roma and authorities- for the purpose of promoting the dialogue and cooperation and establishing practices that will reduce suspicion and exclusion at the local level. The mediators know the Roma communities from the inside, they themselves live the problems and the social exclusion, they speak Romani and they (usually) have the acceptance of their community. In practice, however, they are often called upon to operate as "firefighters", while in other cases they are simply used by the authorities or they work for the promotion of their personal agenda.

Apart from the problems and the limitations, the implementation of the training program for mediators also brought to the surface questions of practical as well as theoretical nature. How can democratic participation be put into action within the community? How can the cooperation between the State and its local bodies be ensured? How can we use the tool of mediation to act and cause real change that makes sense and is to the interest of local communities?[8]

Access to justice - the experience of the JUSTROM program

The continuation of the Council of Europe's intervention in Greece concerns access to justice, with an emphasis on Roma women. The recent reports of the European institutions on the situation of the Roma rarely include specific references to Roma women and the problems they face concerning their access to the institutions of justice[9]. Both the European Commission and the Council of Europe have ascertained that states need to place more emphasis on the particular needs of the Roma women, as well as of children and young people, by developing targeted actions that will address their exclusion. Regarding particularly the access to justice, in the Strategy for Gender Equality 2018-2023, the Council of Europe has made recommendations specifically for Roma women (Council of Europe, 2018), while it has also stressed the need to pay special attention to their multiple and cross-sectional vulnerability, which often makes them victims of violence even by members of their own community[10]. But how can a public service approach the excluded, instead of simply being "available", thus, reproducing in practice the exclusion?

In this context, the JUSTROM program (co-financed by the European Commission and the Council of Europe) was created in order to facilitate access to justice for Roma women, and thus to address discrimination and the violation of their rights. Its implementation began in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Romania (and as a pilot scheme in Ireland). The program focuses on making it easier for Roma women to report issues of domestic violence, illegal evictions, forced marriages, racism against them, and other violations of their rights and access to institutions and services. This is done through partners who

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8   More on the European dimension of mediation with an emphasis on the ROMED program: Iliadis, Ch. (2017). Empowering Roma People in Europe: Council of Europe's Programs on Roma Mediation'. *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe, 15(3)*, 73-89. An appraisal of the experience from the participation in the program: Iliadis, Ch. (2017). Efforts for Roma Integration: Obstacles and Prospects. *Synchrona Themata, 138-139*.

9   Indicatively, European Commission. (2018, March). *Civil Society Monitoring Report on Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Bulgaria*. Retrieved from https://op.europa.eu/s/n7ql

10   Council of Europe (October 17, 2017). Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)10 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on improving access to justice (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 October 2017 at the 1297th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies). Retrieved from https://rm.coe.int/168075f2aa

offer legal advice within the communities, with the help of mediators. Also, by means of trying to empower women's groups in the intervention areas, in order for them to gain basic knowledge so as to be able to access complaints mechanisms, but also to be able, in cooperation with local authorities, to seek solutions to the problems they face.

Access to the institutions of justice is enhanced through the establishment of legal support centres ("legal clinics") consisting of lawyers and Roma mediators. The idea is that these centers function as mediation services, but also provide personalized legal advice, operating inside or near Roma settlements. So, it is not about one more service that simply declares itself "available", though in practice it does nothing to reduce the gap that separates it from those in need. Actually, in its first implementation period alone (February 2017-March 2018) in four countries (9 locations), the program informed nearly 7,000 beneficiaries on issues of access to services, of which about 2/3 were Roma women. Nearly 5,000 people were helped with regards to access -3,000 of which were Roma women- while more than 1,500 legal actions were taken with the help of the program's lawyers, including applications for free legal aid, reports to institutions such as the Ombudsman, appeals to judicial authorities, and so on.

Particularly in Greece, during the first two years (2017-2019), the program recorded more than 2,600 beneficiaries, of which more than 2/3 were Roma women in the areas of Attica, Thessaloniki and Xanthi. The plethora of issues with which the Roma women addressed the groups reveals not only the extent of their vulnerability and exclusion from services and rights, but also the chronic structural and institutional inflexibilities and weaknesses.

We found Roma women who cannot register on municipal registers and issue identity cards, who are "invisible" to the state and cannot have any lawful job, who had been illegally denied access to the constitutionally enshrined institution of free legal aid[11]. We met mothers who, due to their inability to institutionally prove the obvious -their very own existence and identity- and to issue documents, lost their children to foster families and institutions[12]. We helped Roma people who are faced with exorbitant fines that they cannot pay, only because no one explains to them the complicated procedures of the Greek bureaucracy. We identified women victims of domestic violence

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11   Our intervention resulted in the issuing of the 11159/2017 document on 24.11.2017 by the prosecutor's office of the Supreme Court, and then of the 11385/6.12.2017 document by the president of the Supreme Court addressing all judicial authorities of the country regarding the obligation to accept applications for free legal aid even when the beneficiaries are stateless or do not have an identity card.

12   Our reports caused the intervention of the Assistant Ombudsman for the Rights of the Child (231426/57008/2017), while in collaboration with other agencies we caused the addition of Article 62 in Law 4554/18.07.2018 concerning the procedures for the identification of mothers without documents.

who have no knowledge of the existing support institutions, as well as people who tried to rent homes with their legal income, or with the assistance of programs, and to send their children to school and could not do so because of the reactions of locals or of parents' associations. We reported dozens of cases where constitutionally enshrined institutions, such as legal aid, do not work in practice. We received complaints about actions with "racial profiling" on the part of the authorities and about police violence. And much much more.

"Do the Roma want to integrate?"

The Roma are a population with a long history of discrimination against them. It can be argued that together with the Jews they are the communities with the harshest fate in Europe, having suffered the highest degree of discrimination in European history. The so-called "anti-gypsyism" is a widely diffused phenomenon in European societies, the result of which is that the Roma are frequently treated as inferior beings, suffering violations of their rights and discrimination against them. Attributing their incomplete integration and increased delinquency to the biological features of the "Gypsies" and not to their long history of exclusions and limited opportunities, reproduces the stereotypes and prejudices against them. Reports by independent authorities, such as the Ombudsman, have made reference to the unfavorable discriminatory treatment of the members of Roma communities by state bodies, and particularly so by the local government and the police (Greek Ombudsman, 2000, pp. 61-62; 2002, pp. 106-107)[13]. A similar experience is conveyed by the people themselves. This unfavorable treatment does not have an immediate institutional background, but it is a common practice in the way the administration and the police operate, as it is also being reported by several members of the Roma communities.

Social exclusion puts Roma in the margins of economic and social life and deprives them of goods such as education, health, housing and social services. As Lydaki concludes, they are considered to be responsible for their own exclusion, insomuch as they resist their cultural assimilation. Assimilation is presented as an one-way street for their survival, without the provision of alternative ways of managing the situation and coexistence (Lydaki, 2013, p. 17). When externally imposed efforts fail, they themselves are held accountable for their ghettoisation and exclusion.

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13   See also pp. 222–223 (in Greek) at Greek Ombudsman. (2004). *Special Report: Disciplinary - administrative investigation of complaints against police officers* [Human Rights Circle]. Athens: National Printing House. Retrieved from https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/docs/astinomikoi.pdf

There is, however, an unknown number of Greek Roma who are already integrated -or, rather, assimilated- in Greek society, mainly because the have become "invisible" and they are cut off from the Roma communities, by eliminating their characteristics. Besides, in many cases the visibility of the Roma lies precisely in the fact of their spatial isolation. An average gypsy from Dendropotamos in Thessaloniki will go unnoticed in Toumba, while the same will happen to a Roma from Agia Varvara in Peristeri or Egaleo. This invisibility creates the impression held by the majority that "the Roma do not integrate", when in fact the non-integrated -or, rather, the non-assimilated Roma- are simply visible to the rest.

An often asked question is: "Do the Roma want to integrate?" What the non-dominant groups, such as the Roma, want and claim in practice is their participation in the commons in a way that will not force them to integrate into the dominant system (in other words, to assimilate). These claims ask for the re-adaptation of the dominant forms of participation in a way that will allow them to participate while maintaining their identities and their traditional practices. Adapting the forms of their participation and ensuring the equal access of locally excluded groups to their rights, as well as to the decision-making processes, is a prerequisite for the purpose of breaking the cycle of the reproduction of exclusion. Moreover, it is also a precondition for expanding democracy itself. The question, therefore is: "can they, even if they want to?".

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Social distance and spatial distances: settlement geographies of migrants and refugees

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Introduction

The starting point for this text was an introductory presentation on the last day of the "Forum on Migration and Integration". The discussion of the day focused on issues of the city; among other things, on the housing of refugees, their integration in urban environments, its relationship with spatial development, local policies, and the role of civil society. The rationale for the presentation was to outline a general framework for the understanding these issues from the perspective of urban social geography.

A year later, a lot has happened and the public debate in Greece has radically shifted. A far-right discourse appears to be hegemonic and reflected in official policy; ideologically driven interventions and petty political interests, exaggerated announcements, unrealistic expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies constitute a particularly ominous synthesis at the present juncture. In addition, as these lines are being written, about half of the world's population is experiencing some kind of measures restricting mobility, while "social distance" is the doctrine of the day. This new situation has temporarily removed the so-called refugee and immigration "issue" from the frontline and is being used as a pretext for the imposition of ever stricter restrictions. "Social distance" seems to acquire the meaning of a coordinated institutional pursuit of segregation, deterrence of contact, avoidance of any kind of mixing, thus offering an alibi for a covert eugenics.

Even in these circumstances, it is not untimely to reflect on other conceptualizations of social distance, beyond the present juncture. The ways in which people in movement settle in a new place, how they relate with its inhabitants, but also with institutions, the economy, etc., affect various aspects of everyday life and intermingle with broader social transformations. Insofar as collective prosperity is considered a valid demand, and if the minimum goal remains "having some space in which to live one's own life", as Susan Sontag (2003: 120) put it, the care for those who are in a more unfavorable position cannot but concern society as a whole. In this frame, it is important to focus on the geographies of immigrant and refugee settlement and on the socio-spatial processes with which these are intertwined. Such geographies do not only exclusively concern the newly arrived populations; they shape the communities where we all live, they affect the conditions of coexistence and the possibilities of interaction. The aim of this chapter, then, is to place the Greek experience in the context of a more general contemplation.

Social distance has a geography and multiple spatialities: from the level of "high politics" and the scale of the State, to the map of the city and the tangible space of emplaced everyday life. On these more familiar scales, almost a century ago, the Chicago School of "Human Ecology" laid the foundations for the systematic study of the social geography of the city, linking social to spatial distance. Today, however, such forms of understanding seem outdated and perhaps simplistic. Subsequent critiques and radical approaches brought to the fore questions of social inequalities and their generating causes, power relations, and the role of politics (see e.g. Arapoglou, 2015). However, its legacy seems to haunt relevant debates. Part of this discussion centers on socio-spatial processes that can be expressed by two opposing binaries: segregation versus mixing, concentration versus dispersion. These processes, parallel and interconnected, are shaped by a variety of intertwined factors that are context-dependent and operate on larger scales, creating distinct types of urban space with multiple consequences for the people who inhabit it. They are, however, linked, in both the academic and the public discourse, as well as in the collective imaginary, with moral and political evaluations of what constitutes the ideal city, echoing one more binary: integration versus exclusion.

The concept of social integration, easily emphasized in official texts yet without always being clarified, is, in terms of its dimensions and content, multifaceted, ambiguous and controversial (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; Schinkel, 2018; Boccagni & Kivisto, 2019). Regardless of how we approach it, however, during the previous decades and up until the crisis, a process of incorporation of the immigrant population in Greece is evident, even with many difficulties and adversities. Among other things, this process has been marked

by a relative geographical dispersion of the majority of this population (in the country, the cities, the neighborhoods), which has been determined mainly by economic necessity and shaped by informal practices and relationships. In the last five years, however, in the context and, especially, in the aftermath of the events that the dominant discourse termed as a "refugee crisis" (and so continues to misleadingly describe), the intermediation of the State in the reception and temporary housing of newcomers has given shape to a very particular spatial type, which until recently was rare in Europe, at least on large scale: the refugee and migrant camp. The following sections attempt a comparison of the spatialities of the current settlement of immigrants and refugees, in relation to the recent past.

Dispersion, mixture and inequalities: social geographies of immigrant settlement

Scene 1: March 2010. Central Athens districts have been established in the public discourse as epitomizing the situation on the Greek-Turkish border and the "increased flows", at that time through Evros. The area of Agios Panteleimon has emerged as a Golden Dawn fortress, with support from a section of the Greek inhabitants, and as an operations base of its "storm detachments". In the square, the playground next to the church is closed. An adjacent informal mosque has its windows internally covered with cardboard, after at least two arson attacks. But a walk along Acharnon avenue and the surrounding streets captures images that run counter to this situation. The presence of immigrants and refugees, either long-settled or more recently arrived, is visible and evident in the faces and/or clothes of the people who pass by, in the languages they speak, in the shops: food markets with "exotic" products, small restaurants and snack bars, barbershops, stores selling mobile phones and related accessories, internet cafes and a lot more. The gaze pauses on a coffee shop with an old sign referring to the island of Crete; inside mainly (?) Somalis.

The variously inscribed concentrations of visible otherness on the urban space bring in mind basic conceptual tools of the Chicago school: competition as an "ecological process", the "natural areas" and "colonies" of distinct groups, the "invasion and replacement" pattern, etc. Relevant studies focus on the shifts in the social geography of housing in the capital over the past decades. The suburbanization of the population, especially of the middle and upper strata, led to the devaluation of certain areas of the inner city, leaving a gap that was later filled by the settlement of immigrants (Arapoglou et al., 2009; Kandylis et al, 2012). Especially in densely populated central areas with a building stock

from the "golden age" of "antiparochi" (block construction by compensating the plot owners with apartments), the spatial dimension of social mix and inequalities is reflected on vertical segregation patterns, where the weakest social strata and significant percentages of immigrant occupants live on the lower floors (Maloutas and Spirellis, 2015).

Thus, despite small-scale concentrations of some groups in certain neighborhoods, immigrants do not constitute the majority of the population, nor is there a unilateral predominance of certain ethnic groups. The established ethnic enclaves are neither clearly demarcated nor hermetically self-contained, and appear to be characterized by fluidity and shifts - reminiscent of analyses and conceptualizations that have emerged from the study of another paradigmatic US city. The disparate and multidisciplinary "Los Angeles School" gave prominence to a fragmented postmodern urban landscape, characterized by diversity, mixture, hybridization and constant transformation (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr, 1996; Soja 2000; Davis, 2000; Arapoglou, 2006). Such an image is in complete contrast to the dominant rhetoric on "ghettos", according to which the spatial concentrations of distinct groups are considered by definition to be problematic phenomena. What this view overlooks, however, is their voluntary or non-voluntary character, the role of the State, power relations and the inequalities that determine them (see e.g. Peach, 2002; Marcuse, 2005). But the problem is not just a theoretical one. According to V. Arapoglou (2015: 171), this rhetoric has silenced at least three basic components of the complex reality that is being formed:

...the common conditions of deprivation that migrants and non-migrants from the working and lower middle classes face in the city center, the concentration of deprivation in working-class suburbs and peri-urban areas, the heterogeneity and the inequalities inside the migrant population.

The same author, illuminating the case of Athens through an overview of theories developed in the context of "exemplary" cities of Europe and America, stresses the importance of daily interactions in the neighborhoods and public spaces of the city, which contribute "to a process of accepting the 'stranger' and transforming him/her into a 'neighbor' and a 'citizen'", thus constituting a "prime field for the formation of solidarity policies", with a "dual transformative direction", [as] they do not only change the stranger... but [also] his/her neighbors and the neighborhood itself "(Arapoglou, 2015: 173).

Taking into account both the size and the heterogeneity of the immigrant population in Athens, as well as the lopsided position of the capital as a

whole, one could argue that, mutatis mutandis, similar patterns of dispersion and mixture are also observed in other Greek cities, while the emerging concentrations are rather, in most cases, even more moderate. An exception to this may have been the experience of the settling of so-called returning ethnic Greeks from former Soviet republics, which was driven to some extent by the state, leading to relatively homogeneous residential areas in the periphery of Athens, Thessaloniki and elsewhere (Halkos & Salamouris, 2003; Katsavounidou & Kourti, 2006; Gemenetzi & Papageorgiou, 2017). However, the assimilationist policy that was followed eventually turned the public discourse away from these areas. Where the presence of immigrants became visible and preoccupied public debates in a negative way, this did not concern so much the geography of their residence as, for example, the temporary appropriation of public spaces (e.g. parks and squares; see Pavlou, 2001; Psimmenos, 2004; Vyzovitis et al. 2006). It concerned, that is, temporary arrangements that soon changed in character and / or were forgotten. On the other hand, visible concentrations of, for example, stores and businesses, are indicative of economic and spatial incorporation (Labrianidis & Hatziprokopiou, 2010; Hatziprokopiou & Frangopoulos, 2016), rather than segregation and isolation. Besides, similar patterns of dispersion, local concentrations, mixing and micro-segregations, characterize the geographical distribution of the migrant population in the country as a whole, which seems to follow that of the general population, with relative "over-representation", beyond Attica, in dynamic rural and coastal areas or in island touristic areas (e.g., Karkouli & Klimi, 2016).

In general, over the past three decades, the settlement of immigrants in Greece was largely determined by employment opportunities and rental prices. Therefore, the geography of their residence was shaped mainly by the market, even if mediated by discrimination, as well as informal settlement practices, family strategies, kinship or ethnic networks and other social relations. Since 2005, the so-called "mixed flows" of people crossing the Greek-Turkish border have been generalized, with a significant part of these people entering Greece only to continue their journey to northern and western Europe. The limitations of the European asylum system and the inadequacies of the Greek immigration policy have contributed to this lasting but invisible crossing. The search for survival and escape means and for temporary accommodation in neighborhoods (Omonia, Victoria), public spaces (in the small park opposite the Athens Central Train Station, in Attika Square) and ports (in Patras, in Igoumenitsa), have brought to the foreground a series of concerns about the presence of the "Stranger" in the public space (Lafazani, 2013; Koutrolikou, 2015). In retrospect, one could say that this crossing, which culminated around 2010, was a prelude to the events of 2015-16.

From proximity to distance, from mixture to segregation: the camp as a dominant settling model

Scene 2: February 2020. The "migration issue" has become the "refugee issue". In the shadow of the events of 2015, of the sealing of borders and the EU-Turkey "Common Statement", Greece, and especially the islands of the Eastern Aegean, have turned into "storerooms" and internal European Union borderland. More than 25,000 people live temporarily in "accommodation centers" on the mainland. The site at Skaramangas is the largest one, "home" for about 2,800 people, of which almost 40% are children. Industrial landscape, right next to the shipyards, with oil refinery facilities just a little further. The entrance is controlled; a fruit and vegetable stand just across. Inside, as in other similar sites, a plethora of agencies involved in the administration, day-to-day management and support services: governmental agencies, local government, international organizations, humanitarian organizations and NGOs, private businesses. Their logos are highly visible. Apart from the official services, a small "town" with its "neighborhoods", its shops, a square, common use spaces: a school, a gym, a mosque, a laundry, etc. Next to the sea, the "Riviera". The shops are closed, probably due to the time of the day and the strong wind. 13.5 km away from downtown Athens, people are waiting at the bus stop.

The management of the situation as an emergency, even when after March 2016 the numbers of people crossing the border dropped dramatically, while those of the people trapped in Greece did not constitute any kind of "crisis", led to the choice of reception and temporary accommodation in "camps ", "tent cities", "centers ", "structures ", "sites", and so on. Not all of these places are the same, nor are they all camps; however, this is how they have become established in collective consciousness and they are often referred to as "camps".

The basic parameters of an "operational" definition are given, for example, by the main international organization overseeing and/or managing camps, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, according "a camp is any purpose-built, planned and managed location or spontaneous settlement where refugees are accommodated and receive assistance and services from government and humanitarian agencies" (UNHCR, 2014: 12). This definition outlines a whole spectrum that encompasses the enormous heterogeneity that characterizes refugee camps internationally: from makeshift to planned ones, they include all forms of collective living where refugees reside and where government and/or humanitarian agencies usually provide central assistance and services. However, despite its complex and varied typology, in many respects, the

camp is a place of restriction, as the High Commission itself acknowledges (UNHCR 2014: 4):

> ...*the defining characteristic of a camp, however, is typically some degree of limitation of the rights and freedoms of refugees and their ability to make meaningful choices about their lives.*

The academic literature on camps has been significantly enriched in recent years, reflecting not only the growing academic and political interest, but also the proliferation of specific forms and spaces for managing and controlling unwanted populations (Martin et al, 2020). Indicatively, there is talk of an "archipelago of encampment" (Minca, 2015), of "campcapes" (Martin, 2015) and of "Campization" (Kreichauf, 2018), in order to describe and conceptualize the expansion as well as the diversity of this type of settlement. In part, this discussion has been significantly influenced by the work of the Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1998; 2005), who analyzes the camp as an archetypal example of the "state of exception", where the sovereign power suspends the rule of law while the life of residents is stripped of any socio-cultural and political substance and is limited to its basic biological dimensions. According to this point of view, the camp is a "non-place" located at the margins of society and exists in order to control, constrain, filter, and so on (e.g., Diken 2004).

Despite the fascination this perspective still inspires to critical approaches to the contemporary border and immigration regimes, it has nevertheless been questioned for its "totalitarian" perspective, which overlooks the agency of campizationed populations. In many cases, these populations are able to organize their lives in ways that allow them to make individual as well as collective claims, regaining forms of political identity and forming communities (e.g., Sanyal, 2011; Rygiel, 2012; Ramadan 2013; Sigona, 2015; Oesch 2017). Even if one may discern tendencies to idealize the collective and political life prospects in refugee camps, such perspectives have enriched the discussion by recognizing the camp not one-dimensionally as a place of exception and exclusion, but also as a political and social space where everyday life coexists with "Bare Life" - and sometimes prevails (Katz 2015; 2017). Despite the relevant disputes, however, the literature rather agrees on at least four components of the camp as a place which is spatially demarcated, socially segregating, legally excluding and permanently temporary.

The paradox is that, at the same time when the camp is being generalized as a practice in Europe, the international debates and strategic directions of international organizations have begun to question it in areas of the South

where it has been well-established for decades. There, on the one hand, it is intertwined with urbanization processes, as cities but also refugee camps expand at a rate and in ways that make their boundaries indiscernible - so that the latter are integrated in various ways into the urban fabric; while on the other hand it is abandoned, as displaced people informally or formally seek refuge in cities, following collective or individual practices through market mechanisms, support structures and their social networks (Darling 2017; Fawaz 2017). Just two years before being invited to offer its know-how in the establishment and management of refugee camps in Greece, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had published its policy on alternatives to camps, at least when such alternatives are possible and can guarantee the protection of and assistance to refugees. In this, reference is made to the lifting of restrictions so as for the latter to "have the possibility to live with greater dignity, independence and normality as members of the community" and to exercise their rights to free movement, work and entrepreneurship, access to services. etc. (UNHCR 2014: 4). It is obvious that the above possibilities are extremely limited if not inexistent in the conditions of the camp. And yet, its varied versions continue to be the basic and dominant form of refugee "management" in Greece for the past five years.

Of course, this was not the only spatial arrangement in refugee reception and housing policies. At the end of April 2020, 22,400 people were accommodated in apartments (and some buildings) within the urban fabric through the UNHCR ESTIA program. As noted on the program's website, urban accommodation improves the daily life and "the eventual integration for those who will remain in the country", while at the same time "the host population also benefits from embracing diversity through peaceful coexistence" and "the renting of their apartments ". Although it started as a program for those asylum seekers who were to be relocated to other EU countries, ESTIA evolved into an alternative to camps subsidized temporary housing scheme for vulnerable people, and also includes financial assistance in the form of a welfare benefit. As such, its experience so far is considered rather positive, despite its many weaknesses, which include insufficient planning, a lack of systematic integration related actions, the absence of a strategy for gradual exit, the saturation of the available places (Kourachanis, 2019). One could also add the gradations of "vulnerability", the relevant practices that are developed in order for someone to be able to gain access, and the resulting welfare dependence of "beneficiaries" despite their partial autonomy. In relation to the specific interest of this chapter, the dynamics of the housing market e.g. in Athens, led to a geography of ESTIA apartments embedded on the social map of the city, which shows a relative dispersion but also some densities in specific areas of ethnic diversity, allowing for neighborly proximity as well as for socialization

and daily interaction, even if these do not constitute in themselves adequate conditions for cohabitation on equal terms (Papatzani, 2020).

However, in the new geography of "increasing differentiation" produced by the proliferation of borders at the supranational, national and local levels (Papataxiarchis, 2020), the camps play a central role. At the end of April, in addition to the approximately 26,650 people that were living in the various mainland "sites", about 38,280 were left to be crowded on Eastern Aegean islands, mainly in the Reception and Identification Centers ("hotspots") and around them, in miserable conditions amid the lockdown and while the local societies of Lesvos, Chios and Samos had long ago exceeded their limits of "endurance" and the "climate" was already hostile. The issue is not so much whether or not camp conditions allow for social integration, in relation, for example, to urban accommodation in apartments. As a goal easily rehashed in official texts in the absence of a structured and long-term policy, "integration" remains devoid of content. Apart from issues related to the location, the natural and built environment, the infrastructure, the hygiene, housing and living conditions in camps, or to human rights and the available options to refugees for an autonomous life, the forced segregation is additionally shrinking the prospects for social participation and interaction and for equal coexistence and symbiosis.

If this situation is maintained, could we imagine the Skaramangas camp (or any other) being established, in a few years from now, as a new and peculiar semi-formal and ghettoized settlement on the outskirts of the city? As it happens with the refugee camps of the South, some sort of "integration", spatial and social, is rather predetermined in this not-so-improbable case. The question is whether we, as a society, want something like this, and which might be the possible alternatives. The current political debate, volatile and poisonous for the public discourse and public opinion, is slipping into increasingly bleak contrivances: from pamphleteering about uninhabited islands to announcements about "closed centers" - "controlled structures" in official rhetoric, as if the existing ones are out of control. What the above may entail for people, local communities, cities, neighborhoods and our democracy remains, unfortunately, out of the discussion.

By way of epilogue

For several decades now, immigration seems to be the new spectre that is haunting Europe. The immigrant woman, the refugee, the Muslim are considered to come with a conscious intention to abuse our hospitality, to threaten our security, to take our jobs, to take advantage of our system, to

alter our population and our national culture. They, therefore, personify the epitome of our worst fears in front of a rapidly changing, globalized world, where money, products, images and symbols, as well as environmental pollution or viruses, cross borders beyond "our" control, which exhausts its preponderance in the selective management of the movement of people. This management of movement is evidently intertwined, at different scales, with issues of space management (Papataxiarchis, 2020: 21):

> Who is entitled to be where, when and under what conditions is at top stake at all levels of the issue, from the neighborhood level to that of interstate relations. Space is where the political settlement of the refugee issue begins and space is where it ends, hovering between closedness and openness, constantly leaning towards the first.

In Greece, a policy that is ever more explicitly oriented towards containment and deterrence, part of which are the camps, has led to an imposed hierarchy of diversified geographical zones, which, often combined with micro-political expediencies and transactions with local elites, forms new regional and local inequalities, with the worst possible prospects for the refugees and migrants themselves.

As also happens elsewhere, the camp as a general practice was imposed as a temporary "solution" for reception in order to provide "shelter" in a situation of "humanitarian crisis". International and historical experience, however, shows that such a practice was not a one-way path. As Fawaz (2017) conveys from the case of Lebanon, the settling of refugees must not be separated from the framework of (social) housing policy and spatial planning. Instead of the "humanitarian" approach that favors refugee camps, she proposes alternatives that focus on facilitating the incorporation of refugees into the urban fabric, recognizing, utilizing and reinforcing their own collective and individual practices and intervening to reduce discrimination and exploitation. Such a logic is in line with guiding principles that have been specified also in the Greek context, towards the prospect of an integrated and rational housing policy, "the main axis of which [will] not only be temporary housing rehabilitation..., but the securing of permanent housing" (Gemenetzi & Papageorgiou, 2017: 24). Respectively, this logic is also consistent with broader planning objectives the "city of difference", as proposed, for example, by Iveson & Fincher (2013): redistribution, recognition and encounter. Of these, the former aims at mitigating the spatial dimensions of social inequalities, the second attempts to tackle marginalization of specific groups without overlooking their internal stratification, while the third aims at fostering convivial cultures in common places of residence.

Moreover, the experience of self-organized collective housing projects, such as squats, beyond official policies and especially against the camps, can reveal interesting and potentially utilizable potentialities in the search for alternatives for the first settlement of refugees and migrants. Squats were scoffed, targeted and eventually suppressed, in a more general pan-European trend of criminalizing solidarity (see Fekete, 2018; Makaniko et al., 2018). However, despite the problems that may have arisen in specific cases, the possibility of immigrants and refugees to take initiatives and the responsibility of their daily lives in common works in an empowering manner and provides in practice prospects for autonomy and socialization (Kiddey, 2019). Moreover, the squats are examples of collective practices that, as concluded by Tsavdaroglou & Lalenis (2019: 1815), "are not only related to their housing needs and personal space, but they are also related to claiming the right to the city, that is the right to the multiple dimensions of everyday life ", thus producing "emerging housing commons", which can be perceived as "potentially hybrid spatial thresholds, as open communities in motion that constantly negotiate diverse social identities and collectively seek and reinvent the culture of coexistence."

If the settlement patterns of immigrants in previous decades had been shaped mainly by the "market" and had been characterized by widespread "informality", in the last five years they have been largely set by the 'State' and mediated by various control mechanisms. In the same way that, in the past, informal arrangements were identified at multiple levels - legal status, employment, housing practices, social support - today control also has many faces: from the reception and protection system, previously almost non-existent and extremely problematic, to the development of the humanitarian sector and the participation of (part of) civil society, but also to the integration of both into the European border regime and the proliferation of camps. In the previous period, the "laissez-faire" policy, present in its absence and despite the occasional repressive outbursts (let us recall, for example, the "sweeper operations"), equally allowed for conditions of extreme exploitation and racism, but also informal practices and relations of inhabitance and appropriation of space. The settlement of immigrants had been inscribed on the existing social geographies, albeit in conditions of growing inequalities, offering nonetheless potentials of a difficult but dignified and self-determined life, as well as possibilities of cohabitation and conviviality. Today, the forced segregation in camps intensifies the visibility of newcomers "away from us" and produces distinct spaces with multiple implications. As the refugee issue returns dramatically to the forefront after the lockdown, with the forthcoming exits from ESTIA apartments, without a clearly formulated plan for the time being, a new type of "laissez-faire" policy seems to be returning for the post

reception phase. A policy based on the cultivated expectation that "these people do not want to stay in Greece"; and thus the State is legitimized to abdicate its responsibility of caring for them, or even more of ensuring the conditions for their dignified and autonomous next steps.

Even though the dominant discourse insists on degrading people in movement to placeless "flows", human mobility involves localized experiences in specific local contexts (King, 1995: 27). Diverse, multidimensional, complex as life itself, "the spatiality and sociality of migration" (Sandercock 2003) has not been fully mapped and understood – yet it lies out there, as reality and lived experience. As eloquently put in the title of his recent book, D. Christopoulos (2020) argues that the "refugee issue" does not have a solution, because it is not a problem, but a phenomenon "that creates problems" depending on how we are handling it". If we agree that it would rather be better on the whole to learn how to live with it, beyond its higher scales of "management", the bet is ultimately on proximity rather than distance: on equal cohabitation in the everyday places of our common life and on our agonistic participation in claiming and co-shaping them.

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Refugee camps: Spatial design as a response to the so-called "refugee crisis"

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Since March 2016, a large number of people who were on the move towards Central and Northern Europe have been obliged to remain in Greece due to the closure of the "Balkan Route", a fact which led to the necessity of immediate actions addressing their housing and their urgent needs. The establishment of camps on the outskirts of various cities in the country was the main initial response of key actors, such as the European Union and the Greek government.

The present text discusses the context of the aforementioned emergency response by means of the design and operation of refugee camps that have housed, and are still housing, a large number of people. The discussion is based on findings of a research study that was carried out in August and September 2019 through the examination of legislative texts, directives, reports, as well as through semi-structured interviews.

In this discussion, space is approached as a dimension of social policy and spatial proximity and/or distance are seen as directly related to the issue of access to urban resources, to opportunities and rights.

Population movements are not a modern phenomenon. What changes along the history of mankind is the rate and time of the movements. These two conditions are influenced by economic, social and political factors. One of the major changes that were brought about by the end of World War II was the spatial redistribution of the population, as well as the need to design cities that would support urbanization and the needs of their new inhabitants. The

international organizations that were created began to address protection and security issues through international conventions and regulations.

Refugee camps have been, and continue to be, the recipients of the so-called "refugee crisis" and of its effects, bringing to view the social contradictions and conflicts that often alter the existing social ties as well as the spatial significations. They have been a response to an emergency situation, as spaces where people can temporarily receive humanitarian aid and protection. Thus, some of the characteristics of the camps are their temporary character, intended to function until the end of the emergency, the potential protection of their inhabitants against danger, and the over-concentration of population in combination with poor sanitation and living conditions (Ramadan, 2012). As spaces, refugee camps provide accommodation until a more permanent solution is found for the refugees (Ramadan, 2008), shape the identity characteristics of the persons living in them (Ramadan, 2009), and they are places characterized by a "state of exception" that leads to the suspension of laws (Agamben, 2007) and the emergence of new forms of governance and planning within them.

In the Greek example with regards to policies and the management of the spatial organization of the housing needs after the closure of the borders in 2016, we focus on the process that was followed in selecting the areas where the refugee camps were created, on their internal organization and layout, as well as on the ways of decision making. Moreover, we also focus on the possibility held by the people who lived in them to intervene in the already designed space. The main purpose in examining the above is a better understanding of the spatial layout of the refugee camps and of the way in which their socio-spatial dimensions are defined.

In recent years, the increasing number of refugee camps worldwide, as well as the duration of their operation, have prompted the debate on alternative solutions. The new urban agenda recognizes the needs of people living in camps, inside or outside their home country, and this creates a commitment for an international cooperation that will enable the positive contribution of migrants and refugees to the urban environment and to the countryside (UN Habitat, 2017). The establishment of a camp is a response to urgency and its design constitutes an exception to the rule accepted by the world community regarding living conditions. Among other things, this text points out that the design of camps, when there is one, focuses on the "exception"; the effort to meet urgent needs is slowly becoming the norm for the welcoming of people seeking international protection when escaping tensions and crises.

The refugee camps

In times of conflict, mass migration and political upheaval, refugee camps are critical and distinct political spaces with social, cultural and humanitarian characteristics (Ramadan, 2012). Refugee camps are (always or sometimes) accommodation spaces (Ramadan, 2008), spaces where identity characteristics are developed (Malkki 1992; 1996), spaces of exclusion (Agamben, 2007; Redfield, 2005; Turner, 2005), spaces of insecurity and violence, with a special legal status (Loescher & Milner, 2004).

The initial function of camps had been that of meeting military purposes and needs. At the end of the 19th century, the first confinement camps were set up for the purpose of restricting populations and detering movement in controlled territories. In contemporary times, camps have been used for the removal of people from the rest of society. In modern history they have been divided into those which aimed at concentrating and exterminating various population groups and those intended to host populations that move en masse due to economic, social and political developments.

The development of refugee camps

The location of the refugee camps and the structure they have are largely defined by international procedures and standards. The development of refugee camps is the result of cooperation between international organizations and the authorities of the host countries. The International standards include the lay-out of the camp space, the structure of the accommodation units within it and the open spaces, including all possible activities that can take place within them (Sphere, 2011; Sphere, 2018; UNHCR, 2007; Karakostas, 2017; IOM et al, 2015). The camps are usually located outside the urban centers due to the acreage they need in order to accommodate a large number of people, and they are characterized by a clear demarcation in relation to the nearest urban centers. The policies followed define both the design of the camps and the access of those who live in them to services and to the host society, thereby also organizing the processes of support and integration. Traditionally, refugee camps are created on the basis of decisions made "from above", and whereas the importance of refugee participation in the design of the space has been recognized (UNHCR, 2014), in most cases this is done either inadequately or not at all. However, the lifespan of the refugee camps, the events that create the crisis, as well as their consequences for people (Jahre et al, 2017) make us reconsider the approach to their design.

The spatial structure of the camps raises concerns about the quality of life it provides and the impact it has on people for the rest of their lives. The constraints, the isolation and the stagnation that prevail lead to a redefinition of many identity and sociability characteristics of the populations living in them, while hierarchies are rebuilt on the basis of the multicultural framework, of the new standards and rules. The people residing in these spaces tend to adapt to and comply with the life in the camp, while the need for their integration into the urban centers does not cease to exist. There are many examples of setting up camps in slums due to the need for urbanization and the lack of integration of the refugee population in urban centers.

The refugee issue in Greece

Greece, as a country that is a geopolitical crossroads of the Mediterranean, has always been a place of destination and reception (Gemenetzi & Papageorgiou, 2017). The main waves - influxes of refugees and migrants begin in 1922 with the Asia Minor catastrophe. This was repeated in the 1990s with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the movement of people out of Albania and the Balkans due to the war in Former Yugoslavia (Gemenetzi & Papageorgiou, 2017; Triantaphyllidou, 2005; Sultani, 2018; Kapsalis, 2007). In Greece, social housing policies have always been a weak field of intervention. In the present text we focus on the period after 2015, with an emphasis on the handling of the housing needs of refugees in Greece.

From 2000 onwards, the framework for the housing and social integration of refugees concerned mainly housing rehabilitation procedures, mostly for vulnerable persons. After 2015, the housing rehabilitation procedures were intensified due to the increased number of people who remained in Greece. The exigencies and the pressures that came along led to the creation of refugee camps in response to the urgent need for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

The continuous tensions and upheavals in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, and especially the war in Syria, led to a mass exodus. The greatest part of the migrant population is to be found in countries close to their country of origin. In Europe, and more specifically in Greece, the increase in entry started to be observed from 2014 onwards. In 2015 and 2016, about 1,200,000 people entered Europe, while the number of those who have not been recorded continues to be significant (UNHCR, 2016). The majority of these people had left Greece through the so-called "Balkan route" by February 2016. The closure of the "Balkan route", which took place gradually starting in November 2015

for some nationalities, in conjunction with the Joint EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016, forced a large part of the population to be "trapped" in Greece. Refugee flows continue to this day and it is estimated that 74,613 people entered Greece in 2019, while these rates continue in 2020, though relatively reduced. More specifically, 9,486 persons are reported to have entered Greece up to March 22, 2020 (UNHCR, 2019b).

Due to the increase in mass refugee flows in recent years, the European countries began to incorporate emergency response characteristics directly related to the exercise of policing and control on the European borders (De Genova, 2017). This led to the creation of "temporary" accommodation facilities with the use of geographical restriction practices. In Greece, the first and basic needs during this last period concerned mainly the housing rehabilitation of people. These needs were initially met by means of the creation of dozens of camps in the surroundings of various cities. Thus, for the duration of the emergency, the people were accommodated in informal camps located in various places where the setting up of makeshift accommodation and reception centers was possible. These informal camps were intended to be temporary and to operate until the completion of the transition phase. Many of them do not exist anymore, but some others appear to have become "permanently temporary" as they are still in full operation.

Greece as a host country

Infrastructure and the organization of space: the planning example followed in Greece

The combination of the turbulent situation on the borders between Greece and North Macedonia in August 2015, combined with the measures and policies that were being implemented at the time by the EU, led to the creation of some infrastructure on the Greek side of the border in order for the basic needs of the moving population to be initially met. Gradually, and depending on the political developments both in Greece and in the rest of Europe, the situation began to change so that upon the Joint EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016 and the closure of "Balkan Route" about 46,000 people found themselves "trapped" in Greece. Dozens of camps were set up as a temporary' solution for the purpose of addressing the urgent need for the housing of these people.

The design of the refugee camps was based on the availability of buildings and areas where they could be set up. The respondents to the relevant

interviews we have conducted[1] refer to the "panic" that prevailed for an immediate response to the aforementioned need[2]. Moreover, the design of these camps was not aimed at solving society's problems and did not take it into account[3], although the differences and divisions produced by these spaces determine the proximity and the distance by creating spaces of otherness and social reproduction and articulating relations of power and authority (Stavridis, 2006). The planning was inextricably linked to policies, while it was implemented in an uncertain and complex environment without taking into account innovative approaches and solutions[4]. Finally, the economic crisis exacerbated the deficiencies and the weaknesses wherever the handling of the issue and the decision making concerned mainly the management of the borders and less so the response to the housing needs[5].

1 The statements of the interviewees are presented in accordance with the thematic categories that emerged in the research process. The participants were as follows:

N.1.: Female psychologist who works as a coordinator in a Greek NGO that intervenes in camps from the beginning of their operation. Since 2015, she has been Head of an Intervention Program in Eidomeni and later she coordinated both housing and intervention programs in refugee camps.

N.2.: Female political sociologist and since the 1990s an expert on migration related issues in both African and Balkan countries. She has worked for International organizations and has experience in camps for displaced persons and refugees in various areas. Since 2007, she has been particularly engaged with interventions in detention facilities in Greece as well as with integration and development issues in the field of migration.

N.3.: A journalist who had been monitoring the refugee flows in Former Yugoslavia since the 1990s. He later worked on international organizations' programs on the integration and rehabilitation of people living in camps in Former Yugoslavia. In Greece he works for an international organization and coordinates the operation of refugee camps in various cities of the country.

N.4.: Volunteer since 2014 who, along with other citizens of the Municipality of Paionia, provided initially material support to moving populations. His intense involvement led him to further investigate the movement of migrants and/or refugees towards Europe and to bring to view, together with other volunteers, the issue of Eidomeni in the Greek and international community. He has also carried out research on the living conditions of people moving towards various European countries.

N.5.: Civil engineer with many years of experience in both the private and public sectors. He has worked in a humanitarian organization since the beginning of the creation of the refugee camps in Northern Greece, with the aim of improving the conditions of hygiene and accommodation. He has participated in the redesign of the infrastructure of some refugee camps.

2 *"[...] I think that after 2015, panic prevailed and many planning mistakes were made, not only in Greece but in Europe in general [...]" says one interviewee"[...], and another one elaborates on this topic by saying: "[...] I think the authorities started pondering over it in November 2015, when certain nationalities started to be excluded from crossing the border [...] the instruction they had in Gevgelija was to not allow more than 500 people to be inside the country [...] In fact, they were protecting themselves from having too many people staying in the country [..]."*

3 One of the female respondents' comments in relation to this: *"[...] Luck... The only thing we can consider as a plan is that at some point there were selected some military camps and they became ... [...] ",* while another one adds: *" [...] There was no planning, just using what was available [...]. The planning was in the context of urgency and the camps that were built were not intended to have a long duration [...]."* Another interviewee talks about the beginning of the camps' operation *"[...] we, the engineers, were there to cover needs [...]. From a certain point onwards, our goal was to upgrade the infrastructure [...]."* On the same subject, another participant adds: *"[...] there was an approach by the government to get involved in the planning, ...specifications and standards that organizations had to follow, which were a little better than the classic ones of SPHERE [...]. But in the end, the results have not exceeded the SPHERE standards. And as we have already exceeded the pre-planned duration, these camps are collapsing because they were simply not designed for so long[...]."*

4 One of the female participants is commenting on the issue: *"[...] As early as the 2000s, it seemed that the disposition of the European political leadership was to move them as much to the periphery or outside its territory as possible. The agreements and the effort of Turkey to not open refugee camps on its borders since 2012, [...] the issue of debt and the absorption of funds - to include them or not include them to the state budget - played a big role [. ..]."* Another interviewee connects the condition of the creation of the camps with the political developments in the country: *"[...] then we had the referendum, the announcement of the elections and the debate [...] and the closure of the borders on the Balkan route [...] ." "[...] There was no plan for the next day of Eidomeni or the camps. The State was looking to find strategic partners who could help [...] the camps did not have infrastructure, at least not the same [...]."*

5 According to one of our respondents, *"[...] until 2015 there was no housing policy for anyone, neither for a refugee*

The Joint EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016 (European Commission, 2015; European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2016), along with other agreements that were made at a European and Balkan level, have largely defined the main framework for the management of the refugee issue. The focal points of all policies have been the issues of reception and identification, as well as the measure regarding relocation (Council of the European Union, 2015a; Council of the European Union, 2015b).

The main challenges Greece is faced with regarding the refugee issue are those of a reception system that will be characterized by adequate living conditions, of a system for the provision of international protection and of a plan for the integration of refugees into the Greek society[6]. However, the interviews also raise the issue that the camps do not meet the needs of the refugees and especially the request for independent living, while there is also criticism about the housing programs[7].

Refugee camps as a phenomenon of socio-spatial self-organization

Refugee camps are created as places that provide protection to people who are in the most vulnerable position and in the greatest need (Bulley, 2014). The camp space covers needs that go beyond the ephemeral and the urgent, allowing for rehabilitation, dignity and maintenance of ties and relationships such as family and community, thus reproducing an entire system (Corsellis & Vitalle, 2005). The way space is created within the refugee camp is a process of socio-spatial self-organization (Fuchs, 2003; Al-Qutub, 1989).

The top-down planning and the contribution of refugees to changes in the space

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nor for a Greek, for no one. [...] Social policy in Greece started in 2015 [...]. Before the crisis, things were a little different, you would be hosted by your friend, your family, your compatriot [...]. There was a network, there was solidarity, there were some squats [...]." On the same subject, another participant says: "[...] There has never been a housing policy for refugees, we had confinement policies [...]. At that time, the funding was lost in the creation of huge and terrific centers that we never saw [...]." On the same subject again, another person points out that: "[...] the housing policies are directly related both to immigration policies and to politics in general, but also to the circumstances [...]." Finally, another participant reinforces this by saying: "[...] observing things from the point of view of legislation and in the context of my work as an engineer, I believe that policies largely define the legal or/and the general framework [...]."

6   "[...] how is integration possible for those whose eyes can never see our own[...]" wonders a female interviewee, while another respondent tells us: "[...] in general there are several camps that they are not even serviced by public transportation [...]. In the beginning it was the urgency, now the situation has turned into a hosting crisis because the number of people has increased and the camps did not have the potential to grow fast enough. So, we continue to see that the crisis becomes more serious as time passes by. And integration as such has not reached the agenda at all [...]."

7   "[...] If they do not have an exit strategy regarding housing [...]" says thoughtfully an interviewee, with another one adding: "[...] No one was interested in the issue of integration [...]. All subsidies and programs are piecemeal [...]." Finally, another participant comments: "[...] There is still no integration policy, not even a management policy [...] there is lack of a political approach [...]."

The long life span of the camps makes it necessary to also take into account other functions covered by them, such as social, cultural and political, by adding new dimensions to the traditional one-dimensional perspective of refugee camp planning (Jahre et al, 2017). The planning process needs to acknowledge the important role of both the local community and the suggestions of the persons living in the camps and to do so through participatory processes.

The refugee camps were created and are still to be found outside the urban centers, without much contact with the local communities. This isolation keeps people away from any kind of information that would help them understand the new context of the host country, while it is also making it difficult for the host society to understand and accept its new members[8]. To some extent, spontaneous, small-scale and short-term interventions in the camp space used to change the original design and the orderliness that had been decided "from above". These interventions can be seen as a response to the long wait of those who live in the camps, and they are related to the type and infrastructure of each area. Female interviewees have pointed out that the space is often limited and defined by rules that do not allow interventions[9].

Planning, participation and spontaneous interventions

The way in which the refugee camps were planned is focused on the urgency of the situation that defined the process, which did not include the participation of the residents. The space improvements that were made were the result of the residents' individual actions, while group or community actions were prevented, thus leading to the separation of the residents both from each other, within the camps, as well as from the local community. As it is characteristically implied in the interviews, participation was limited and within the planning framework[10]. The interviews show that while meetings with the community were actually taking place, the resulting suggestions were not taken into account when they concerned spatial changes or the

8   According to a participant, *"[...] they were not even given a chance in the planning process, because the specifications were set by the technical service of the Ministry and they were not discussed at all with the refugees and with the local communities that hosted them. But the refugees themselves do make interventions in the space, even if it is only in order to feel a little bit like home. But even these interventions are not allowed. It is policy, ...all construction must stop [...]."*

9   *"[...] the camps follow certain standards and do not allow people to develop plans to adapt the space to their needs" [...] there is hypocrisy [...] they could not control the situation [...] very frequently it is the law of the mighty that applies ... they were not allowed to make any suggestion and whatever suggestion they made was rejected [...]."*

10   *"[...] to intervene, you need space. If a container is practically attached to the other [...] there is not much to do [...]"*, says a participant. Another female participant describes her own participation and its conditions: *"[...] The important thing was the collaboration of the engineers with other groups of professionals, with other teams such as the ones on gender, protection, and community engagement issues. It was through these groups that I collaborated and [...] we discussed with the refugees [...]. This is how I saw that the social dimension had to be included ... because if this dimension is not there when one goes to solve a problem, then they can often create other problems and discriminations [...]."*

catering services[11].

In view of all the above, it appears that the participation was defined through the meetings with the community, which were mainly informative in character. The residents made suggestions about the arrangement of the camp and its management only up to a certain extent. Spontaneous interventions, wherever these occurred, tended to add elements of the people's individual and cultural identity, influencing the space and its characteristics. Both participation and the spontaneous interventions are determined by the general conditions prevailing in the camps, but also by the institutional framework. Important factors here are the regular alternation of the populations and the sense of lacking stability. The refugee camps in Greece were designed and are still functioning as temporary structures responding to an ongoing urgency; in other words, as accommodation spaces for the duration of a transition stage. In this way, it is the sense of non continuity that defines the terms under which the camp residents become involved or not. There was no real reinforcement of participatory processes and this had a negative effect on people's self-organization. As those living in the camps could not invest in the space by creating new identities within it, they ended up merely using it as defined by the rules that had been set "from above". Thus, they continued to live away from the local communities and -in their majority- without any real interaction with them. The situation changed with the commencement of the monthly financial aid program (Greece Cash Alliance) in 2017, a point after which people started being able to themselves take care of their basic needs, thus considerably enhancing their contact with the local community and economy.

Conclusions

The 2020 inflows prove that the so-called "refugee crisis" is not over. This is a reality that affects both Greece and the EU in terms of their having to address and manage the ever-increasing needs for housing, integration, education and employment. The management of the situation so far shows that there

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11   According to a female respondent *"[...] while there are community meetings and people are encouraged to participate and enliven the camp, this is a bit illusory [...]."* On the same subject, another respondent commented: *"[...] They do not have any substantial participation. They are not allowed to intervene [...] in general, the open reception structures must be as they are without any intervention [...]."* Another interviewee pointed out that participation had limits and was subject to certain conditions: *"[...] Efforts were actually made along with various groups of professionals, but not in order to make important decisions that had already been made. There was participation [...] Decisions about where the containers would be placed or where the kitchen and bathroom would be placed had already been made. Beyond that, yes, there were updates and discussions about what their needs were [...]. There were discussions, there was information, we often went to show them, to explain to them, what we did. There was cooperation and coordination [...]. There was interaction with the people, but what you need to know is that participation in all these projects should only be up to a limit. It is not the refugee who will make the final decision. This should be clear and understandable in any kind of intervention and decision making [...]. However, they did participate in the various stages [...]. They were involved when the discussion concerned shared spaces [...]."*

are distinct "poles" at the political level: on the one hand, the phenomenon of xenophobia, with an emphasis on border protection and the distribution of reception and hosting responsibilities, and on the other, a humanitarian approach, through the application in practice of the European values and the effort to find sustainable solutions (European Commission, 2019; European Commission, 2015).

The new reality, the experiences of the past and the examples from the international community prepare the ground for the inclusion of a new social and urban-planning parameter in the processes concerning the design and operation of the refugee camps. The scale and dimensions of the issue in Greece lead to the need for a redefinition of the concept of the *refugee camp* for the purpose of identifying and implementing the best possible solutions for both the response to urgency and the transitional phase. The development and operation of the camps was affected by the lack of planning and the momentousness of the situation, in combination with the inability of the already existing European and Greek policies to respond to the urgency of the issue. We keep on referring to the "refugee crisis" as if it has merely been a crisis of reception, while what has not been defined through strategies and action plans is the broader goal, namely that of social integration.

The lack of a plan for integration and the non-timely planning of alternative solutions have allowed the continued existence of camps, while recently the population in them has increased as a result of the transfer of people from the Reception and Identification Centers located on the islands that are entry points. The living conditions in the camps remain poor, while many consider them inhumane and seek alternative housing solutions that would bring them closer to the cities and the host society. Many refugees and asylum applicants have taken part in self-organized structures such as house squats (mainly in Athens), something that has recently been dealt with by means of evacuations and the transfer of the people to camps. The answer to this could be a coordinated way of operation aimed at avoiding repression and enhancing prevention, in combination with decent assisted living within the urban fabric. However, any actions taken by the refugees and asylum seekers themselves remain limited and within the strict context of a humanitarian crisis.

Careful and timely planning in a context with so many challenges can be a tool for social transformation, contributing to a multilevel solution of infrastructure and housing problems and, therefore, acting as a catalyst for social but also spatial resilience. In contrast, a design process with the up to now characteristics makes the refugee camp an experience that has no other meaning than that of an indefinite wait and of inciting individuals to idleness

and to obedience with the aim of managing an inactive population.

The challenge is still here: Can refugee camps be replaced by other structures that would result from different approaches regarding the response to "emergency"? Could such approaches take into account the views of the persons who already have the experience of what it means to live in refugee camps, so as for the planning of the accommodation spaces to be participatory and sustainable? Can the uprooting from the previous stable conditions of life be compensated for through new socio-spatial structures that will contribute to the psychosocial development of the uprooted people? Can housing programs help with the integration of refugees in Greece?

From the second quarter of 2020 onwards, there is a big issue in Greece regarding the consequences of the evictions from structures of housing programs and of the gaps that exist in the areas of reception and housing for the integration as well as the autonomy of people. Apart from the role of the refugee camps so far, the whole reception and accommodation system should also be reconsidered. At present, the reception and hosting system includes the "hospitality" of the asylum seekers in camps, the transfer of vulnerable people to apartments, while those who have been recognized as refugees and were living in residences of the 'ESTIA' program will be supported by the program 'HELIOS' of IOM for six months. However, it is necessary to consider whether this three-level plan contributes to integration and is not merely an answer to the urgency of the "refugee crisis", especially if we take into account the current developments with the evictions from the 'ESTIA' program and the transition to the 'ESTIA II'.

The questions continue to be many and persistent and their answering has to acknowledge, among other things, that the dynamics of the space and its design parameters ought to include as a central goal the strengthening -rather than the discouragement or even the deterrence- of human interaction and of interpersonal and social relations.

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Homeless Migrants, Refugees, Greeks: How far, how close?

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Introduction

Social housing policies have long been a deficit field of intervention of the Greek social protection and welfare system. Historical and recent factors reinforce the growing concern that old and new communities, old and new city dwellers, do not have equal access to housing solutions, which jeopardizes the prospects for a dignified life and social inclusion. The policies implemented concern the management of extreme poverty while there are no policies that could promote social cohesion. Late compared to other European countries, Greece is experiencing a phenomenon which is widely recognized as a housing crisis affecting more the most vulnerable.

The reasons behind this crisis are specific, largely structural, and are directly linked to political perceptions and the development of similar interventions. It is true that Greece has a relatively high rate of home ownership compared to the EU, but this rate has fallen by almost 10% during the fifteen years period from 2004 to 2018[1]. After the dissolution of the Workers' Housing Organization in 2012, the country does not have an institution to design and implement horizontal housing policies, while it does not have any public or

1   Eleftheros Typos (17/01/2020) The rate of Greeks owning property fell to 73,5%. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://eleftherostypos.gr/oikonomia/514085-sto-735-ypoxorise-to-pososto-tis-idiokatoikisis-ton-ellinon/
Kathimerini, Rousanoglou, N.Ch. (04/01/2006). At 84,6% the homeownership rate in Greece. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://www.kathimerini.gr/238258/article/oikonomia/ellhnikh-oikonomia/sto-846-to-pososto-idiokatoikhshs-sthn-ellada
Kathimerini, Rousanoglou, N.Ch. (04/03/2018). The dream of homeownership is "fading out". Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://www.kathimerini.gr/951911/gallery/oikonomia/ellhnikh-oikonomia/3e8wriazei-to-oneiro-ths-idiokatoikhshs

municipal social housing stock, as this perception never permeated public authorities and policies. Housing is considered a strictly private matter, while in times of crisis, access to it is primarily based on an emergency management model - through subsidy policy, while in the case of homelessness, it relies mainly on dormitories (temporary accommodation) and homeless shelters as well as day-to-day service structures.

One of the new dwellers' groups particularly affected by the housing crisis are applicants and beneficiaries of international protection as well as migrants. Among them, there are individuals who face multiple vulnerabilities such as children, the elderly, people with disabilities, unaccompanied minors, etc. As recognized by the National Integration Strategy 2019, *"these groups need more protection and support so that they do not fall victim to exploitation, social exclusion and poverty. The protection policies for vulnerable groups are based on the need for targeted actions to meet the socio-economic lag that occurs, as they face problems of adaptation and integration in the Greek society"*. In the present text, an approach of the measures and problematic areas identified in housing rehabilitation is being made and consequently an approach of the influence that any notion of integration of new residents has.

Chronology

The conditions created by the wars and the continuous military mobilisations during the period from 1912 to 1922, increased by the tendencies of urbanization (Vassiliou, 1944) and much more by the arrival of about 1,200,000 refugees coming from the areas of Asia Minor and the Pontus. The policies that have been pursued focused on the immediate rehabilitation of the homeless refugees who had camped in various places, in various cities of Greece. Thus, the Refugee Care Fund was created, while the urban and rural rehabilitation programs began through the Refugee Rehabilitation Committee, providing materials for the quick creation of cheap housing, an in kind aid in the agricultural sector or enhancing the efforts of the refugees that had the financial ability to build their own homes.

In the following years, an important parameter regarding the housing of the refugees, their descendants, those who arrived in the big cities from the damaged countryside due to the World War II and the Civil War, but also of the weak strata of society in general, was the tolerable phenomenon of the arbitrary constructions and their legalization from time to time. This phenomenon, combined with the Mediterranean model of family, the informal social solidarity or support from charities, has led to a lack of a structured

governmental policy for those unable to integrate into policies aimed at wealthier incomes.

This situation was maintained also during the repatriation from the countries of Western Europe, but it was done in different terms. The refugee flows were also present (Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, etc.), but in manageable numbers. Things have changed dramatically since the late 1980s, as the country welcomed returnees from the former Soviet Union with the consequent need to rehabilitate and integrate the then-newcomers both in terms of housing as well as socially. The data presented in the Parliament on 17.03.1992 referred to 71,378 people, however, based on data from Pontian parties, they exceeded one million, with Attica and Northern Greece being the main places of establishment (Hatzimbirou, 2005).

The phenomenon continued in the following years, forming a new reality which was reinforced by the large flow of migrants coming from Albania, as well as the growing number of people arriving in the country from war zones seeking protection. This situation put high pressure on housing rehabilitation, forcing the official state to adopt relief measures.

The situation was not treated universally, nor did it concern all population groups. For the housing rehabilitation of expatriates, the National Foundation for the Reception and Rehabilitation of Expatriates and Returnees Greeks was established proceeding to housing actions which ranged from urgent ones (shelters, e.g., in the Lagadikia village in Thessaloniki), semi-permanent ones (e.g., in Farkadona, Trikala) and to largely permanent housing rehabilitation (EKTENEPOL settlements in Xanthi, Komotini and Sapes[2]).

Apart from the measures for returnees, no corresponding measures were taken for migrants and refugees, thus pursuing a policy of discrimination, positive or negative, depending on the point of view. As the first official registration and legalization process of migrants' stay took place only in 1997, social interventions were absent. Many migrants began to live together in low-cost housing, huts or in their workplaces, while refugees received support from charities and non-governmental organisations until the early 2000s.

This support was mainly concerned with training or the facilitation of their integration into the labour market, whilst the housing dimension was almost absent. Similar actions had been developed for the returnees, while another common feature was the settlement of the new population and its integration into the existing social system and workforce. The intense pressures and

2   Greekscapes. The new settlement of Ektenepol in Xanthi. Retrieved from: http://www.greekscapes.gr/index.php/2010-01-21-16-47-29/landscapescat/71-2009-07-31-10-08-08/215-ektenepol

needs for housing were accompanied by urban planning innovations and deviations with the tolerance of the state, according to the well-known model. Key features of these innovations and deviations were the spatial sprawl and the efforts for housing both within the urban fabric and in the countryside. In any case, the 1990s marked the introduction of measures for refugees and migrants entering the country.

Living together – but where?

According to the 1981 census, the number of foreigners living in the country were 180,000 persons (of whom 63% came from leading industrialised countries, representing less than 2% of the total population). A decade later, the population of foreigners has not changed significantly, but those coming from the leading industrialised countries would constitute less than 50% of the total. However, according to the 2001 census, the number of foreigners over-quadrupled, as 762,000 persons were registered (7% of the country's population, which reached 11 million by that time), while in 2011, when the latest census was conducted, their population rose to 912,000, increased by 150 thousand compared to 2001 (Kotzamanis & Karkouli, 2016).

Due to slow procedures in examining applications for international protection, especially until 2013, but also the low rates of refugee status recognition and therefore necessary protection, in the past, the vast majority of applicants chose to obtain legal status as migrants. This was not an independent and conscious choice; it was largely imposed by the Greek asylum policies and the alternatives they were given. Even in cases where the examination procedures are more immediate, they are characterized by a huge number of rejections[3] (Hammarberg, 2009). During the period while waiting for the decision on whether or not international protection will be granted, housing services for asylum seekers are being provided in camps or apartments, structures where access to unaccompanied minors and vulnerable families is prioritized.

On 20.10.2014 the available reception places for asylum seekers amounted to only 1,063, mainly funded by the Emergency Refugee Fund (ERF) of the European Commission, to a lesser extent by the State Budget, as well as by European Economic Area (EEA) Grants (UNHCR, 2014). Zero to minimum regular resources coming from the ERF have been directed to the housing of recognized refugees, mainly as "Providing advice and assistance services in areas such as housing, livelihood, integration in the labour market

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3   Data for the period 2005-2012 are available at: http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&perform=view&id=12630&Itemid=73&lang=

(UNHCR, 2014)". Similarly, the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals resources concerning migrants are generally directed towards integration actions, but the housing aspect is again absent. Finally, these resources often reach their recipients, mainly non-governmental organizations, with excessive delay[4].

The vast majority of these people have been through centres/camps for reception/detention/protection of foreigners/irregular migrants[5] (whose name depends on ideological parameters) that have been created at the main points of entry in the country since the early 1990s. It is a matter for discussion whether integration into a society starts from the first moment of contact with it - if statement like that is true, the quality and living conditions there do not support a process that has a chance of success (Kyritsi, 2014).

The housing conditions in these areas have been characterized as inadequate by the media in 2004[6], unacceptable by the Council of Europe in 2009 (Hammarberg, 2009), problematic to completely inappropriate by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights in 2016 (GNCHR, 2016), insufficient under the responsibility of the Greek State by the EU Commission in 2017. The inability to ensure adequate housing conditions seems to be the continuous problem over time.

Nowadays, the ESTIA programme is being implemented for the housing of vulnerable asylum seekers, starting in 2016, through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and with EU funding[7]. However, given the fact that the programme is being implemented under the "co-financed programme logic" aimed at a specific group of beneficiary population, the need for a next phase that will be focusing on refugees has soon became clear[8]. An attempt is being made to meet this need, again with EU co-financing from the HELIOS program implemented through the International Organization for Migration[9].

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4   Arsaion Community, Information and communication blog of Arsis' Athens Office community members, March 2010, NGOs letter of protest for the European Refugee Fund. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: http://arsisathina.blogspot.com/2010/03/blog-post_26.html

5   Migreurop. From European Migration and Asylum Policies to Camps for Foreigners. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: http://www.antigone.gr/files/en/library/selected-publications-on-migration-and-asylum/eu/from_eu_migration_to_camps.pdf

6   Kathimerini, 09.01.2017. European Commission: Insufficient situation in the refugee reception centers, under the responsibility of Athens. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://www.kathimerini.gr/890906/article/epikairothta/politikh/komision-aneparkhs-me-ey8ynh-ths-a8hnas-h-katastash-sta-kentra-filo3enias-prosfygwn

7   UNHCR, Estia (16/06/2017). Housing Programme: a house for refugees in Greece. Retrieved from: http://estia.unhcr.gr/el/programma_stegasis/

8   Voria (02/08/2017). NGOs letter to Mouzala regarding the accommodation of recognized refugees. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://www.voria.gr/article/epistoli-mko-se-mouzala-gia-ti-stegasi-ton-anagnorismenon-prosfigon

9   IOM, Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (Helios). Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://greece.iom.int/en/hellenic-integration-support-beneficiaries-international-protection-helios

Informal forms of housing (e.g., squatting or community hosting) were called upon to support migrants or individuals seeking of international protection that face housing insecurity, ensuring a much higher level of integration than that achieved by those living in camps. This form of housing was not accepted by the official mechanisms of the state, resulting in the almost complete evacuation of these places in the last year.

In the same way, the funding for hosting structures for beneficiaries of international protection also comes from EU budget resources. It is, however, impressive that the state is able to have its own resources for projects and infrastructure that are classified as deterrent policies, and even those that the European Union refuses to fund (e.g., the Evros fence, the floating dams, the closed camps), while the investment of own resources in housing or integration is zero (with the exception of the "Housing and Employment" program).

Today, the position in which the beneficiaries of international protection find themselves, is gradually deteriorating. The accommodation in apartments of the ESTIA programme is replaced, in the best case, with accommodation in camps, while in the worst case, the only prospect -for refugees- is to sleep on the street, as in the case of Victoria Square or Eleonas.

Housing and accommodation are among the most critical refugee policies. The two main alternatives given to refugees are accommodation in open accommodation centres (or camps) and private accommodation. Once people are granted the refugee status, they often face extremely precarious living conditions, despite their protection status, as reception system is intended for asylum seekers only.

Access to housing remains a major challenge, due to a variety of factors, such as high rents and pressing landlord requirements. Competition in local real estate markets between recognized refugees and locals, seeking affordable (social) housing, is also an issue to consider: the growing number of refugees and the lack of housing could enhance segregation and prevent their integration into the local community (ESPON, 2018).

Housing in the National Integration Policy

The final version of the National Integration Strategy is posted on the website dedicated to the consultation procedure[10]. The Strategy, which recently closed its first year of implementation, estimates that housing policy for migrants and refugees is included in reception and integration policies, as part of a broader migration policy (p. 10).

In the reception phase of those seeking international protection, access to housing (among other things) lays the foundation for their subsequent successful integration into the host community, acting as a kind of early integration stage. During the integration phase, housing is considered a prerequisite for achieving it. In particular, in cases of the newly arrived population that has received international protection, integration aims at the smooth transition from the stage of protection to the host community, through actions combining temporary housing with the provision of financial aid, language courses, the possibility of entering the labour market, etc. (p. 13).

The connection between new arrivals and protection, and the consequent non-implementation of actions in this phase (i.e. learning of Greek language), that seem to be intended for the next phase, is methodologically questionable. However, it seems that access to housing is, in any case, considered as a *condictio sine qua non* for the migrant/refugee population. In this context, informing the population is considered as a strategic goal and therefore, this is prioritized by the immediate implementation - among others - of an electronic portal with integrated real-time information (p. 37).

Contrary to what has been said, however, the right of equal treatment of nationals granted to third-country nationals holding a single residence permit in this case relating to access to housing may not be applied under the Strategy (p.18). This is at a time when the Strategy itself accepts and utilizes relevant research, according to which *"third-country nationals continue to face barriers to the education system, the labour market, and access to decent housing... Therefore, they are at increased risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to host countries citizens, even when working"* (p. 31).

Regarding the housing conditions in the Open Accommodation Centres and the Reception and Identification Centres, the words "suffering"[11],

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10   Ministry of Migration Policy. (2019). National Integration Strategy. Athens: Ministry of Migration Policy. Retrieved from: http://bit.ly/OPENGOV-INTEGRATION-STRATEGY-072019

11   UNCHR, (21/02/2020). Act Now to alleviate suffering at reception centres on Greek islands – UNHCR's Grandi. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from: https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/2/5e4fe4074/act-alleviate-suffering-reception-

"overcrowded"[12], "alarming overcrowding"[13] etc. regularly used by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the last year are indicative and describe in detail the situation, despite the fact that upgrading / strengthening infrastructure is included in the objectives (p. 38) of the Strategy.

Supported housing and living of unaccompanied minors over 16 years in protected apartments (Strategy, p. 40), was legislated by Decision D11 / oik.60207/2717 (Government Gazette 4924 B - 31.12.2019). However, it is interesting that the Special Secretary for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors feels the need to clarify that *"the money for the program derive from EU funds and not from the regular budget of our country. In other words, they are being paid by European taxpayers"*, adding that *"that does not mean that we are discounting transparency, accountability, control and efficiency – on the contrary[14]"*.

The housing dimension of the cooperation with the Local Authorities for the promotion of the integration at the local level (p. 42, 43), seems to be lagging behind in various parts of the Strategy. Reception Centres are sought to be "away from the world[15]", something that has been happening steadily for at least the last twenty years (apart from Lavrio, camps that received asylum seekers in the 2000s such as Sperchiada, Elassona, Agiasos, etc.), were also located away from the urban fabric - a policy followed by the state with regard to the Roma, too[16].

At the same time, the recent change in the terms of implementation of the ESTIA programme seems to create the need to emphasize the good cooperation between the Local Government and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, however, the specific activities[17], referred to, and the consequent

centres-greek-islands-unhcrs-grandi.html

12   UNCHR, (21/02/2020). Vulnerable asylum – seekers struggle to access medical care on overcrowded Greek islands. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from: https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2020/2/5e4fc07b4/vulnerable-asylum-seekers-struggle-access-medical-care-overcrowded-greek.html

Human Rights Watch, (24/03/2020). Greece: Move Asylum Seekers, Migrants to Safety. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from: https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/24/greece-move-asylum-seekers-migrants-safety

13   UNHCR, (07/02/2020). UNHCR calls for decisive action to end alarming conditions on Aegean islands. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from: https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2020/2/5e3d2f3f4/unhcr-calls-decisive-action-end-alarming-conditions-aegean-islands.html

14   Iefimerida (24/02/2020). Irini Agapidaki. Agapidaki: The government is lying regarding the granting of an allowance of 1.500 euro to unaccompanied minors. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://www.iefimerida.gr/ellada/eirini-agapidaki-psema-1500-asynodeyta-prosfygopoyla

15   Solomon MAG (11/02/2020). Eleni Stamatoukou. Away from the world: Refugee Reception Centres in Greece. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://solomonmag.com/data-stories-el/makria-apo-ton-kosmo-kentra-ipodochis-prosfi-gon-stin-elada/?lang=el

16   General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning. On the Outskirts of the city. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XxyQWRY8W8

17   Notis Mitarakis, Minister of Migration and Asylum (01/07/2020). The ESTIA II programme supports the Local Government. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://www.mitarakis.gr/gov/migration/6195-trikala-estia

expansion of the number of Municipalities (Strategy, p. 46) have yet to be achieved, while at the link included in the publication it can be seen that, contrary to what is written, the interlocutor represents a specific Municipality and not the Central Union of Greek Municipalities. Finally, the question is whether the proposal of the Strategy *"every Municipality of the country should prepare and submit for approval to the Ministry of Migration Policy a Comprehensive Action Plan regarding integration"* has been implemented and by which local authorities in particular (p. 43).

The integration pilot program for beneficiaries of international protection whose main component is the provision of housing and *"is to be implemented in the Municipalities of Thebes and Livadia"* (p. 47) seems to have been inadvertently included in Strategy's text, since it was officially presented on 14.02.2018[18], while the launching of its implementation was announced on 25.04.2018[19], fourteen months before the final version of the Strategy. Even though the short-term housing program for beneficiaries of international protection (p. 46) is being implemented, it does not seem to have taken the slightest step for the development of a social housing network or for housing in sparsely populated rural settlements (p. 48,49) which are foreseen in the Strategy.

However, in all that has been described there is a question that hovers. The implementation of an integration policy for third-country nationals, beneficiaries or non-beneficiaries of international protection is appropriate, necessary and desirable. But can there be a separate housing policy for them? And by analogy, can there be a separate housing policy for Roma, for women, for minors, separate policy for the elderly? And if so, given the specifics of these populations, do these policies converge somewhere? Do they have anything in common? Can they somehow be combined? And what is the institutional body that coordinates, monitors, evaluates and integrates the conclusions of these policies in a common framework of a "Greek housing policy" addressed to those living in Greece?

In Greece, the acquisition of housing by those who are deprived of it or are inadequately housed is the object of special care of the State[20]. The

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18   Ministry of Migration Policy. (14/02/2018). Presentation of the HELIOS programme for social integration of refuges and migrants. Official presentation by the Minister of Migration Policy, Giannis Mouzalas, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and the Municipalities of Levadia and Thebe. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://government.gov.gr/parousiasi-programmatos-helios-gia-tin-kinoniki-entaxi-prosfigon-ke-metanaston/

19   Municipality of Thebes. (27/04/2018). Initiation of the HELIOS programme in Thebes and Levadia. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: http://bit.ly/THIVA-MUNIC-27042018

20   Constitution of Greece, article 21: Protection of the family, marriage, motherhood and childhood, rights of person with disabilities. *1. The family, being the cornerstone of the preservation and the advancement of the Nation, as well as marriage, motherhood and childhood, shall be under the protection of the State. The State ensures the provision of decent living conditions for all citizens through a system of guaranteed minimum income, as provided by the law. 2. Families with many children,*

institutional responsibility that for many decades was under the Ministry of Health and Welfare's responsibility, has now been transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and specifically to the Department of Social Housing Policies of the Directorate for Combating Poverty[21].

The Department of Housing Claims Management also operates under the Directorate for the Protection of Asylum Seekers of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, with referrals concerning third country nationals experiencing homelessness or precarious housing in the urban fabric[22]. The National Centre for Social Solidarity is also responsible about this population[23].

"The care for homeless and financially weak citizens, which concerns granting of municipal and community plots or provision of financial aid, subsistence and medical supplies to residents who face serious subsistence problems..." is under the competence of the Local Government[24]. The Local Community, where it exists - expresses through its President *"opinion to the relevant City Council on general or specific problems concerning the residents and the community region, especially homeless and vulnerable groups of the population of the area"*[25]. It is interesting that the reference is now made not to citizens but to residents, as well as that *"the control of the observance of the provisions concerning the spaces of temporary settlement for mobile population groups"*[26] is under the Local Authorities' responsibility.

Epilogue

The competencies of housing policymaking appear to be divided across different service/institutional levels. Perhaps at some point, especially now that the digital age provides highly advanced support and monitoring tools,

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disabled war and peace-time veterans, war victims, widows and orphans, as well as persons suffering from incurable bodily or mental ailments are entitled to special care of the State. 3. The State shall care of the health of the citizens and shall adopt special measures for the protection of youth, old age, disability and for the relief of the needy. 4. The acquisition of a home by the homeless or who are inadequately sheltered shall constitute an object of special State care. 5. Planning and implementation of demographic policy, as well as taking of all necessary measures, is an obligation of the State. 6. People with disabilities have the right to benefit from measures ensuring their self-sufficiency, professional integration and participation in the social, economic and political life of the Country.

21   Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity. Homeless Care. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: www.astegoi.gov.gr

22   Greek Republic. Ministry of Migration and Asylum, General Secretariat for Migration Policy, Directorate for the Protection of Asylum Seekers, Department of Housing Claims Management (01.04.2020 to 30.04.2020). Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: http://bit.ly/MIGRATION-GOV-30042020

23   National Centre for Social Solidarity. Retrieved from: http://ekka.org.gr/index.php/about/2018-05-11-06-34-05

24   Municipal and Communal Code, L. 3463/2006 (FEK A 114/30.06.2006, Article 75) Responsibilities. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://www.eetaa.gr/apps/kodikas/k_arthra.jsp?arthro=75

25   Cleisthenes Programme, L. 4555, FEK 133A/2018, Articles 83 and 84.

26   Article 75 of Municipal and Communal Code, L. 3463/2006 (FEK A 114/30.6.2006).

it may be necessary to open the debate on the following areas:

- The need to formulate long-term policies, especially during this period when the State Services are called upon to blueprint and outline the priorities of the following funding programming period.

- The investigation on the necessity of unifying the housing policies in the long run, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, of the competent state body. The procedures of this consolidation are also worth exploring.

- An unequivocal answer to be given on whether integration or social participation is achieved in general through housing, while other forms being transitional stages, taking into account any peculiarities of the respective reference population.

- The investigation of solid partnerships required for the aforementioned, as well as the institutional changes that must be made, where necessary.

In this way, we can reasonably assume the beginning of a process to overcome what has been called the *"residual approach to Greek social housing policies"*[27], especially at a time when the continuing impoverishment of the Greek population now requires structural cuts and interventions. At the EU level, the German but especially the forthcoming Portuguese Presidency seems to have prioritized the issue of housing[28], while its inclusion in the European Pillar of Social Rights (Principle 19[29]) provides the rationale for seeking the required methodologies and resources. If there is a time when what has not been done in the past needs to be done, the time is now.

For the time being, indicative in terms of management by the Greek State institutions is the case of the returnees who in 1992, were housed in containers in the camp of Farkadona, Trikala. Eleven years after their initial settlement, the City Council decided in 2003 to grant municipal plots, however, this decision was not implemented for the next fifteen years and the list of beneficiaries has been updated only in 2017[30].

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27   Tonia, K. (28/02/2018). Housing Policies in Greece: non-existent prevention, deficit treatment. Marginalia, Issue 02. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://marginalia.gr/arthro/koinonikes_politikes_stegasis/

28   FEANTSA (24/01/2020). Homeless cannot be just another 'Fact of Life' in the EU. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://www.feantsa.org/en/news/2020/06/24/opinion-portuguese-minister-mendes-godinho-european-commissioner-schmit-and-goodwill-ambassador-leterme?bcParent=26

29   European Commission. The 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_el

30   Prefecture of Trikala, Municipality of Farkadona (2017). Excerpt from the minutes of the meetings no. 21/2017 of the Municipal Council of the Municipality of Farkadona, No. Decision 203/2017. Update of the decision no. 24/2006

In the meantime, in 2007, the "FARKADONA Project" having as a subject the life in the containers of the camp, was introduced to the Thessaloniki Biennale, presenting the *"causes/conditions of population resettlement and the formation of new ways of perception and representation"*. Today, nearly thirty years later, these people remain still in the camp, sometimes with a power outage[31], but they have taken their place in artistic eternity.

Social housing policies are absent from the country's social policy, refugee housing is added to the list of problematic areas of housing at a time when Greece has not yet recovered from the economic crisis. Housing is one of the fundamental rights as defined by the Constitution of Greece, certainly, housing is not a condition itself for the integration of refugees, but it certainly helps towards this direction.

Integration into the host community is a complex, multidimensional and gradual process with legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions. It is a dynamic and multifaceted process that includes interconnected dimensions that enable refugees to integrate. One of the dimensions of the refugee integration strategy is housing, aiming to strengthen the support provided in the integration process.

The latter itself involves an assumption: the movement of people, regardless of the pros and cons we consider accompanying it, is now a reality. In perhaps the largest European host country since World War II, Germany, the moment of this admission came only in 1998, when the newly elected Social Democrat and Green government declared for the first time that *"an irreversible migration process has now taken place"*[32], proceeding to the design of similar policies. More than two decades later, the need for Greece to give its own answer seems urgent.

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of the Municipal Council for free concession of municipal plots, to the returnees citizens and permanent residents of the Municipality of Farkadona. Retrieved August 26, 2020, from: https://farkadona.gr/attachments/article/767/203_2017%20%CE%91.%CE%94.%CE%A3..pdf

31   TRIKKI press (03/10/2019). The "cut off" the electricity supply to the settlement of Returnees in Farkadona. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from: http://bit.ly/TRIKKIPRESS-03102019

32   European Foundation for the Improvement of living and Working Conditions (2009). Housing and segregation of migrants. Case study: Stuttgart, Germany (p.6). Retrieved September 9, 2020, from: http://www.bollettinoadapt.it/old/files/document/3134EUROFOUND_STUTTG.pdf

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Rhetoric of Fear in the City:
Examples from Thessaloniki

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This text focuses on the spatial consequences of urban transformation and socio-spatial segregation that are related to fear, as these are reflected in public discourse, placing an emphasis on the spatial and mental fragmentation of urban areas (Tulumello, 2015). More specifically, the text looks at how public discourse on the Internet - announcements and news articles - amplifies fear, reproduces narratives and can possibly shape space related attitudes, behaviors and uses.

Public space interventions often aim to exclude specific social groups from using it. A recent relevant example is that of Victoria Square in Athens, where, in the summer of 2020, the Municipality of Athens removed all the benches of the Square in an intervention that was characterized as "urban regeneration project". This move reduced the use of the specific public space by the residents who, in the case of Victoria Square, are largely migrants and the primary users of the Square. Similarly, years ago, a number of olive trees were planted in Omonoia Square, with benches placed underneath them, thus creating a pleasant resting point for the residents. These benches were also mainly used by migrants who frequented the square. Not long afterwards, following the removal of both the trees and benches, Omonoia Square was turned into a harsh landscape of concrete by means of one more intervention that was again characterized as "urban regeneration". Similar examples have

also been identified in earlier redevelopments of free spaces and squares in Thessaloniki, such as the ones of Plateia Dikastirion (Courts Square) and of the area around the White Tower.

People's activities in public space are affected by a variety of factors, including the natural and the built environment. These activities can be related to both the necessary daily functions of the residents and to their entertainment and socialization. The social character of the activities is an important factor for the social integration of both the native residents and the migrant and refugee populations. According to Gehl (1987), when the quality of the environment of public spaces is low, the human activities developed are primarily the necessary ones. In the opposite case, the use of public spaces increases, as their high quality[1] multiplies the opportunities for social interaction and socializing, something that in turn strengthens community control (Coley et al., 1997) while promoting social inclusion and social cohesion (Peters et al., 2010) and enhancing the sense of security.

Often, through "sadistic" urban planning and architectural interventions, public spaces are structured as symbolic desert fields, thus discouraging and driving the residents (especially marginalized social groups) away from specific public spaces or even from entire districts, gradually pushing and restricting them to other areas, where both the people and the areas as such become invisible. These practices intensify social segregation and spatial stigmatization as they amplify fear and stir up rumors about the areas where these social groups are ultimately restricted.

The organizing of citizens in urban areas through institutions and forms of political organization has created certain dynamics and led to the modification of ties such as those of kinship (Wirth, 1938), of neighborhood and of social solidarity. Gradually, and due to the conditions brought about by World War II, the state began to intervene in the planning of cities, setting the terms and rules for the distribution of populations in them. In the 21st century, the city is perceived as a dynamically complex system whose structure and form affect its inhabitants, while spatial planning and design takes different directions from the hitherto strictly defined ones. These directions had mainly to do with a form of organization that was based on functionality, without taking into account other factors such as mobility, social justice, the ending of exclusion, and so on.

The spatial conditions that prevail in the cities determine the feeling of

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1   The term 'quality' does not refer only to the quality of the materials, but also to the overall quality of planning as a procedure, which includes elements such as green spaces and is implemented with the aim of improving the daily life of a city's inhabitants and of enhancing the satisfaction they take in relation to the public space.

insecurity and fear. The feeling of insecurity fosters contradictions and exclusions regarding the space, dividing urban areas into safe and dangerous ones. Fear is associated with the feeling of insecurity, the threat against physical integrity, the loss of goods and of the existing status quo, the loss of the individual's position in the social hierarchy or the loss of the homogeneity of identity (Bauman, 2007), while it constitutes a means for exercising power. Age, gender, social perceptions and the boundaries of urban space (England & Simon, 2010; Davis, 1999; Pain, 2001), combined with the feeling of fear, create mental maps (England & Simon, 2010) and the everyday geographies within which someone moves. According to some researchers, fear can be classified under three categories: the fear of crime, the fear caused by the insecurity of an non-familiar space, and the fear of losing an already known condition, as, for example, when there occurs a change in the populations residing in an area.

In the urban space, which is often understood as unregulated, the feeling of fear is a reaction of the human body that is directly related to its need for safety. The invisible threat of an unknown 'other', of an unknown future, of an unknown hazard, is transformed into a sense of (inflicted) insecurity. This feeling can become an object of exploitation in the hands of any power or institution, which, using the rhetoric of "security", can intervene in the city space and implement strategies that impose limits, visible or not, rules and control practices, thus transforming the geography of the city into a topography of "security".

This text approaches the spatialization of fear (Tulumello, 2015) using as example the city of Thessaloniki. It examines how the rhetoric adopted in relation to specific urban areas establishes stereotypes, causing fragmentation of the urban fabric (Tulumello, 2015) and segregations in the uses of public space, as well as how it often functions as a tool for the exclusion of the 'other' by isolating persons and groups. The recording of the rhetoric used in the case of Thessaloniki was based on the collection of data from the Internet, for the period 2015 - 2019, while for the elaboration of these data a tool for analyzing the content of online sources was created (Sjovaag & Stavelin, 2012). More specifically, the examples explored here are those where fear and the related rhetoric lead to socio-spatial segregation (Kovacs, 2014; Martín-Díaz, 2014) through the creation of fortified communities. For this purpose, a tool was created for the search and identification of places in the city that trigger the emotion of fear (Lai & To, 2015). The period that was chosen is used as a benchmark for the social, demographic and political changes that were brought about by the so-called "refugee crisis".

Approaching the feeling of fear in the city

As mentioned above, fear constitutes an important factor in urban space (Bannister & Fyfe, 2001), shaping it, defining the rules of spatial cohabitation (Bauman, 2003), and strengthening social segregation (Davis, 1999). In the urban system, the feeling of fear is triggered by the loss of familiarity with the space, the disquiet in front of the foreign and the unknown, but also the dread of the possibility of crime, which can impel communities to rally together (Davis, 1998). This feeling often evokes the innate need for protection and safety, while it is frequently used to reinforce social, environmental and economic inequalities, defining to a large extent the relationships of hierarchy. On the basis of this feeling, relations of politics and domination are built that have important consequences on social relationships and on spatial segregation, constructing identities and narratives about a city's areas and inhabitants. This condition leads to stigmatization and exclusion, affecting negatively the integration of social groups and individuals in the wider community.

The appeal to the feeling of fear is often used to impose adaptive or disciplined behaviors on the boundaries of space (Foucault, 2011). Consequently, the emotions of citizens can be turned into tools for the promotion of ideas, policies and measures. The relevant rhetoric influences the inhabitants, basing itself on the rationale of "the interest of society". The creation of socio-economic poles influences the processing of information and the assessment of risk, thus cultivating a culture of fear.

Urban planning implementations can strengthen or weaken the role of the city as a space for social mingling. The complexity of everyday life in the city, the stimuli and the images received by the individual, as well as the wider social, economic and political situations that prevail, affect the emotions of citizens and this is reflected in the space. At the same time, the quality and structure of the urban environment and the various urban interventions play a decisive role in developing either the emotion of fear or the sense of security.

Space is reshaped in order to meet contemporary challenges with regards to the quality of life, but also contemporary "threats", as this is often the way in which migratory and refugee flows are perceived. The connection between space and fear is related to governance and to the built environment, while it is mediated by many different factors, such as the individual, the community, social life, spatial interventions, the property of the inhabitants.

Fear, in general, is an emotion the emergence of which is associated with multifaceted causes and its interpretation is not limited to the spatial factor.

In the urban space, though, it is an issue that has not been analyzed in a way such as to allow us to accurately present the effects it has on the structure of space and society, as well as on the integration of social groups, despite the fact that it is a significant part of the daily life of people who live in cities. The development of urban areas that trigger the emotion of fear leads to their limited use, with the main feature of life in these areas being the visible or invisible fortification behind this emotion. This emotion arises from complex systems that are shaped by personal traits, images, past experiences, influences from third-party narratives that usually pertain to both the areas as such and the social groups that live there, as well as by the use or not of an area and by the feeling of familiarity.

The fear in front of the foreign, the different, the reduction of income, the reduction or even loss of property, the cultural heterogeneity and the disruption of security (Davis, 1998) creates in people the need to redefine their relationship with the space and the stimuli it engenders, depending on their personal characteristics (age, gender, financial status, etc.). The already existing inequalities and divisions among social groups stir up the social sentiment, thus creating greater tensions between privileged and non-privileged. This entails an increase in the sense of insecurity, which is also reinforced by the quality, structure, form and function of the urban space. The interdependence between people and the urban space is so deep-seated that it is often difficult to specify whether it is fear that defines the space or vice versa. In essence, modern cities affect the psychology of the inhabitants and the composition of society, but they are also influenced by the latter at the level of urban structure. According to Sennett (1990), cities reflect the fear of exposure and their structure implies an effort to minimize the exposure to visible or invisible danger for the purpose of reducing the sense of vulnerability; a fact that has tangible consequences to both the built environment as well as to the social structure of a city.

The inhabitants of cities adapt their movements and shape their own sense of the urban space based on whether the latter is familiar or not, safe or not, organized or not, homogeneous or non-homogeneous, public or private, with a dense or a diffused form of construction, as well as on the basis of the structure of roads and of the traffic on them, the quality of infrastructure, the density of vegetation, the lighting, but also the characteristics of the population living there. These distinctions define the form that urban space takes. At the same time, the urban and architectural design that is chosen to be implemented can incorporate defensive, fortifying and segregating features in order to enhance security, surveillance, etc. Each approach translates into different design interventions that separate residents into victims and perpetrators, into "we and the others".

Fear, as mentioned earlier, can be used as a tool for the exercise of politics in order to establish a sense of "security" in the urban space. The emotion of fear acts as another form of ideological repression of the mind and logic, while it leads to the disruption of relationships and of social cohesion. A result of this condition is often the exclusion of urban neighborhoods and the reduction or the non-visitation / use of them. This brings about a discontinuity in the urban fabric and the sense of a disruption of the lived space, along with the social activities and practices accommodated in it, while this discontinuity is expanding.

## Cultivating fear as a tool of exclusion

In the city of Thessaloniki there are certain areas characterized by a certain degree of exclusion due to the rhetoric of fear that has been developed in relation to them. This has also emerged in the research carried out on the contents of social networks and electronic news media. People are often significantly influenced by the above as far as their beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviors are concerned in the context of their practices with regards to public space (Lai & To, 2015).

The research aimed to identify the way in which perceptions and attitudes about areas and their inhabitants are formed, as well as how the uses of these areas are affected by such perceptions and attitudes. The search in the sources was carried out by entering the terms/phrases "fear", "dangerous area", "harassment", "violence", "crime", "migrants", "drug users" and "night". In addition, there was made use of data from the reports of the Racist Violence Recording Network, as well as from announcements on the webpage of the Greek Police. The data collected are summarized on Map 1.

These data point to the existence of several neighborhoods in the city of Thessaloniki which bring about fear to its inhabitants, although this does not entail directly the reduction of their use. There were important data concerning specific areas of the city that had been heavily covered by the media. These were the areas of Dendropotamos, Kamara - Rotonda, the campus of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, as well as the part of Vardaris between the Railway Station and Giannitson Street. The reports regarding these areas apply mainly to nighttime hours, while the announcements and posts about the area of Dendropotamos apply to the whole twenty-four hour period.

Based on the above, the research focused on these specific areas in order to record the way in which they are depicted in the various announcements and

news articles on the Internet. For a better understanding of the fear rhetoric that is being developed in these areas, there took place a combined search with the use of both the names of the areas and the terms "fear", "safety" and "danger". Moreover, the search focused on articles referring to the overall situation in the areas, avoiding the examination of articles that are making reference to specific cases of law-breaking.
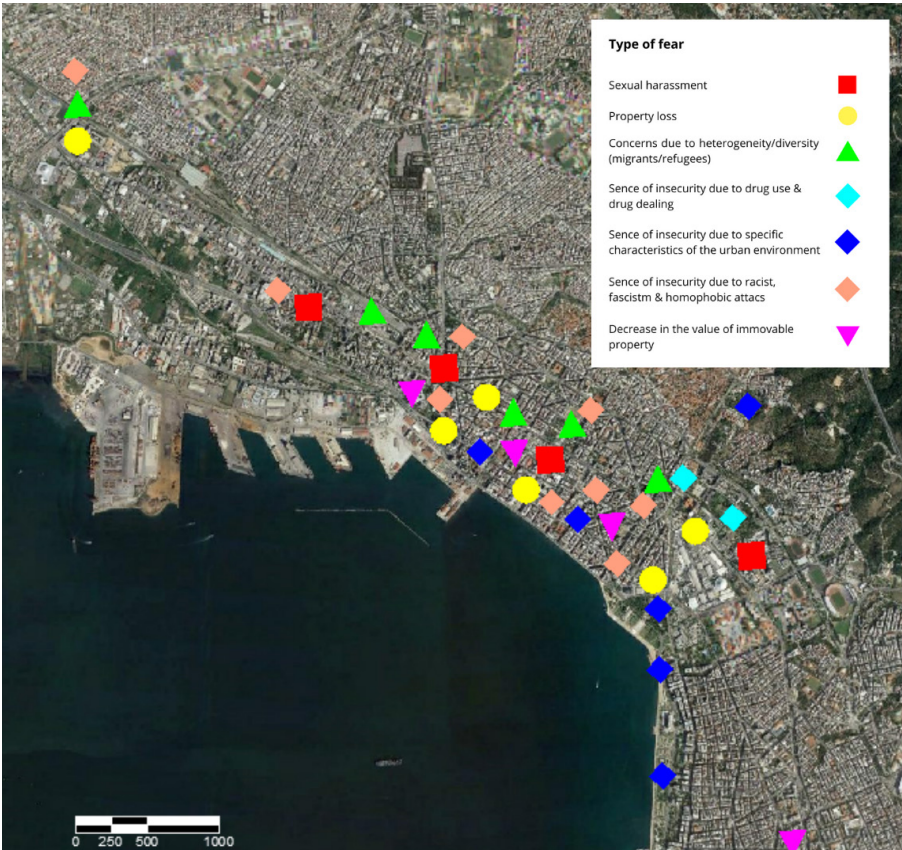
Map 1: Urban Geographies of Fear, City of Thessaloniki

As it can be seen in the Mental Map of Fear presented below, words and/ or phrases that are often used in articles about the area of Dendropotamos are "avato" (inaccessible), "gangs", "sowing terror", "ghetto", "vendetta" (feud). The semiology of the area of Dendropotamos is quite particular as its connection with the city is very difficult, even though it is closely adjacent to the historic center of Thessaloniki at its western entrance point, while its

image and the feeling it evokes are markedly different. The area is surrounded by expressways, railway tracks and a river, all of which set both material as well as mental boundaries. Its historical and spatial development (a soil supplier for pottery factories in the past, with unregulated building projects outside urban planning procedures, and with warehouses, construction sites, industrial units, car breakers yards and biological wastewater treatment plants to prevail in its periphery) has turned it into a spatially segregated area that is socially excluded from the rest of the city, or, in other words, into a 'terrain vague'[2].
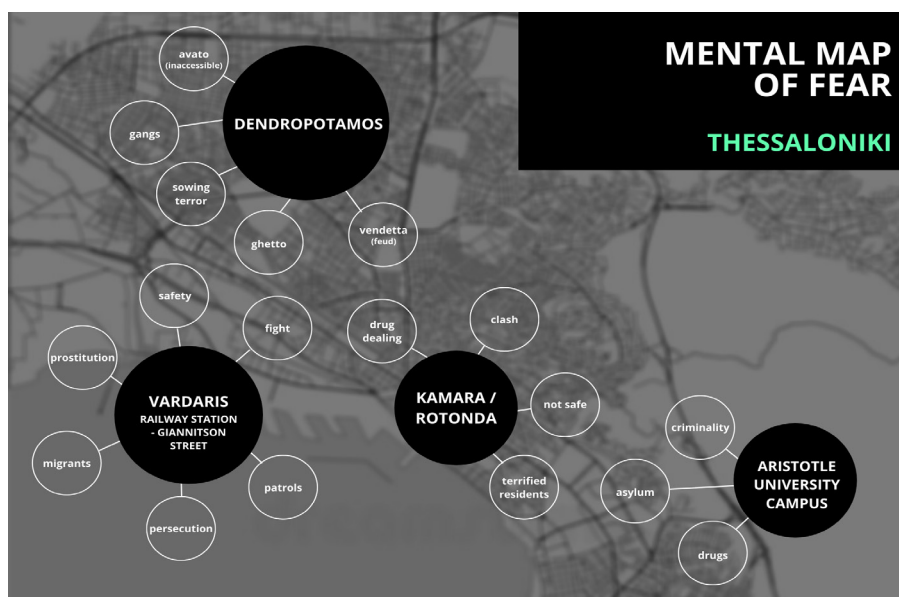
Map 2: Mental Map of Fear, City of Thessaloniki

In similar fashion, the words/phrases predominantly used in the news coverage of the area of Kamara - Rotonda are "drug dealing", "clash", "not safe", "terrified residents". It is a locality of general residential land use, on the edge of the historic city center. The importance and historicity of the area are proven by the three landmarks -historical monuments of the city- that characterize it, creating an imaginary axis of demarcation: the Rotunda, the Arch of Galerius and the palaces of Galerius in Navarino Square. With

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2   The term 'terrain vague' was introduced into the literature by the Catalan architect Ignasi de Solà-Morales in the mid-1990s. It describes places that are "undefined, imprecise, blurred and uncertain." These places do not fall within the "normal" urban organization due to their inefficiency to serve a primary function in the systems of production, consumption, infrastructure or leisure. The question posed by Solà-Morales is "How can architecture function in a Terrain Vague without becoming an aggressive instrument of power and of abstract reason?" (Solà-Morales, 1995, p. 29).

the gradual obsolescence of the city's old urban and architectural stock and the movement of the urban population to the suburbs during the 1990s and 2000s, the building units in the area began to be inhabited mainly by students and migrants. The abandonment of the public space marked the loss of the value and use of these areas, with obvious signs of neglect that resulted in a decrease in the numbers of visitors and the activities that are taking place there. Urban abandonment reduces the quality of an area's standards at a wider level and elicits the emotion of fear. In recent years, the area preoccupies the news media as a haven for illegal activities, with some residents making frequent complains about the situation in the neighborhood.

For the area of Vardaris -Railway Station – Giannitson Street-, the words that dominate in the media are "persecution", "migrants", "prostitution", "fight", "patrols", "safety". This area, and more particularly the section between Giannitson Street and the railway tracks, is characterized by some as the "Bronx" of Thessaloniki, i.e., the infamous area next to the large hotels and office buildings at the western border of the city's historic center. Examining carefully the urban morphology and the historical development of the area, we find that the district of Vardaris has always accommodated 'joints' and prostitution. In fact, the few family homes that used to exist there had to have a written note at the entrance so as for people to distinguish them from the surrounding brothels. The urban sprawl, however, caused a building boom in the area in the 1990s and 2000s, which was abruptly interrupted by the economic crisis of the second decade of the 21st century. The result was the appearance of huge building units as opposed to the lower residential buildings and business premises of the past. Today, the area corresponds to a model that combines zones of general residential use, pure residential use, and non-disturbing industry use, although the density of buildings is low. In this way, large urban voids have been created which, combined with the low quality of the natural and built environment (lack of lighting, large traffic arteries, unfriendly construction for pedestrian movement), the inadequate service of the area by public transport and the general social disorganisation[3], generate conditions for a geography of urban crime and an 'edge city'[4].

3   Social disorganization theory: A theory developed by the Chicago School and related to socio-ecological theories. It directly links crime rates to neighborhood ecological characteristics -a core principle of the theory stating that location matters. In other words, a person's residential location is a substantial factor shaping the likelihood that that person will become involved in illegal activities. More specifically, the theory suggests that, among determinants of a person's later illegal activity, residential location is as significant as or more significant than the person's individual characteristics (e.g., age, gender, or race) (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003).

4   'Edge city': The term was introduced to the literature by Garreau (1992) (Los Angeles School) to characterize districts that were developed in previously suburban residential or rural areas. These areas are not only the affluent circumscribed suburbs, but can also be industrial, commercial, poor, and often areas where distinct ethnic minorities are located (Knox & Pinch, 2006). According to Garreau (1992), edge cities are the standard urban development form of the meta-metropolis worldwide.

Concerning, now, the Campus of Aristotle University, the three words that predominate in the relevant articles and posts are "criminality", "asylum" and "drugs". The campus space has been in use since the establishment of Aristotle University in 1926. Its development has created a large urban void at the eastern boundary of the historic center, which forms an axis with the Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF), breaking the continuum of the urban fabric. In fact, the campus space is used at specific times in the course of the day and in a fragmentary way. The semiology of the campus is suggestive of a functionalist approach to construction, fervently supported by the French architect Le Corbusier and the modernist movement at large. This approach to architecture and city planning was dominant in the post-war Western capitalist countries. However, it was met with strong criticism, as it failed to meet the well-meant declared intentions of the designers. The unfriendly materials that prevail, such as concrete, the huge volumes of mass and the large urban voids, devastate the human entity, encouraging urban segregation and evoking feelings of exclusion and isolation. In point of fact, according to Birmingham (1999, p. 291), building units designed according to Le Corbusier's principles can be described as "architectural systems that reinforce systemic racism." In recent years, the Aristotle University campus has been downgraded socially. The prevailing rhetoric blames the way the university-asylum is managed, though this does not seem to be at the heart of the problem. It is rather the structure of the campus and the functions within it that define the use of its free spaces, influencing the types of activities that take place on it.

It was observed that, apart from the areas themselves, the references that are made in the online media concern also specific social groups living or being active in them. The combination of these references to social groups with various experiences and narratives of other people may well be one of the factors that contribute so as for these areas to acquire their specific reputation and use. This results in the stigmatization of entire regions and social groups, thus reinforcing the reproduction of stereotypical perceptions, leading gradually to their exclusion and impeding their integration.

By way of epilogue

According to Lefebvre (2006), public space is the environment that plays a mediating role between politics, society and the individual. In addition to the online news articles, there also took place a search in various fora as well as in discussions below social-media posts in order to detect the way in which the online public discourse influences and modifies behaviors and practices. The results of this search suggest a possible change in the uses of public

space through the avoidance of specific areas in the city, which leads to the separation of public space into safe and unsafe, visitable and not areas, as well as to the disruption of social cohesion. The built environment is affected by, but also influences, the emotion of fear. Intense urbanization triggers various fears about living conditions in cities, due to the high concentration of population in them. These fears, however, lead to decisions that help the individual understand the way in which the human environment is developed. Social and economic inequalities exacerbate tensions and perhaps conflicts, which in turn intensify the fears, thus leading to socio-spatial segregation. That is, the rhetoric that develops about areas and social groups changes people's habits, as well as the uses and design of space, thus stigmatizing, separating, and excluding specific groups from a wider spectrum of social life and public space.

Feelings of fear and insecurity often lead to extreme forms of protection and backing of a portion of the city's inhabitants, causing social division. The search for security leads to surveillance, thus polarizing the citizens, who are asked, at the same time, to be disciplined. This condition leads to the spatial segregation of the population (Foucault, 2011), creating building typologies such as guarded residencies (Flusty, 2001) with the use of security companies and/or cameras, or "invisible areas" within the city limits.

In the case of Thessaloniki, we identify the way in which the feeling of fear works in relation to what is perceived to be an infamous area. Through the spatial and mental fragmentation of the areas, the way in which fear affects the socialization and coexistence of different identities in the city is made prominent. The structure of the city determines to a great extent the social activity of its inhabitants, but at the same time it is determined by it. The integration of all residents into the city is defined by the space and design policies adopted. A key feature in this process is the adaptation to the changing realities of a diverse society. Depending on its characteristics, space can either accommodate this diversity or reinforce the existence of vague zones, often isolated from the rest of the city even if they are within its boundaries. The rhetoric of fear that develops about an area reinforces the exclusion from it of a series of activities, thus complicating any social mingling of the inhabitants.

A non-cohesive and fragmented area, along with the way in which it affects the generation of emotions, constructs discontinuities both in space and social relationships as well as in the collective memory of the inhabitants. This often brings to the fore contradictions and reactions, reproducing a rhetoric of comparison between the "old" and the "new", distorting reality and creating problems in the interpretation of new shared experiences. It is precisely this gap that is usually filled by any rhetoric that is developed in an attempt to

interpret the new situation that is treated as unfamiliar, with the result being the generation of the emotion of fear, which hinders the construction of a new collective urban identity, thus fragmenting public space.

The economic crisis and, even more intensely, the recent crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the need for the use of public spaces in urban areas. Public space goes beyond the traditional conception of a park, a square, or a street, as it is an important factor for the overall well-being of the inhabitants of any area. The narratives that are developed about areas and neighborhoods often determine their use but also the typical urban functions and interventions within them. Important, in this context, is that we place the human being at the center of any political and urban interventions, taking always into consideration the particular and divergent characteristics and needs of different social groups. Public space planning has to be guided by the need to improve the quality of life and it should aim at facilitating integration and deconstructing any rhetoric or narratives that bring about the segregation of space and of its inhabitants.

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Recognising refugees in Greece: policies under scrutiny*

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Prior to 2013, responsibility for refugee status determination (RSD) in Greece, a major entry point to Europe for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, traditionally lay with its police and the ministry responsible for public order. The country's asylum system was widely criticised for ineffectiveness, lack of guarantees, mass prolonged detention under substandard conditions, and pushbacks, generating fear and mistrust among persons in need of international protection. These deficiencies led the European Court of Human Rights to condemn the country for *refoulement* and inhuman or degrading treatment of asylum seekers; the systemic deficiencies of its asylum procedures were confirmed by the Court of Justice of the European Union[1].

Under pressure from the EU and internationally, in 2010 Greece set up a National Plan on Asylum and Migration and committed to reforming its asylum system by establishing independent civilian asylum authorities to conduct RSD: the Asylum Service at first instance and the Appeals' Authority at second instance. The Plan was supported by, among others, the European Commission, UNHCR and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). The need for independent RSD was at the heart of the Plan's strategy, and EASO and UNHCR provided considerable support, largely through training and knowledge sharing, and also financially. Through partnerships with NGOs UNHCR has also provided capacity building to staff, and information to newcomers at entry points and to those being held in detention facilities.

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1   ECtHR [Grand Chamber], M.S.S. v Belgium and Greece, 2011 bit.ly/ECTHR-MSSvBelgiumGreece2011; CJEU [Grand Chamber], C-411/10, 493/10 N.S. and Others, 2011 bit.ly/CJEU-NSandOthers2011

The complexities of the legislative and administrative changes required, however, coupled with financial constraints caused by the severe recession, meant that the transition to the new regime was slow. During an initial transitional phase, which lasted until June 2013, the police retained competence for registration and first-instance RSD. UNHCR representatives were permitted to be present at interviews and to ask applicants questions, which improved the quality of interviews[2]. However, the number of those being recognised in first-instance decisions remained close to zero. UNHCR's opinions on cases were advisory only; the Greek authorities retained authority for making decisions and were largely unwilling to grant international protection. As a case in point, in 2012 only two out of 152 Syrian applicants were granted refugee status or subsidiary protection at first instance[3]. On the other hand, the establishment of independent Appeals Committees led to a 32% recognition rate within a year[4].

The new Appeals Committees consisted of three members: one civil servant, one jurist specialising in refugee/human rights law (chosen from a pool of experts prepared by the National Commission for Human Rights – NCHR)[5], and a second jurist nominated by UNHCR. The independence and impartiality of the Committees were safeguarded through establishing specific recruitment criteria and a robust selection process. The Director of each Committee, for instance, was recruited by a group of experts with the involvement of the independent Greek Ombudsman, academics and UNHCR. In addition, members of the Committees enjoy full independence in their duties.

This scheme brought improvements in the quality and fairness of RSD and raised recognition rates. As an example, during the first months that such Committees were in place, almost all Syrians, Somalis and Eritreans whose claims had been rejected at first instance were granted international protection at second instance. While many refugees continued to avoid the Greek asylum system due to problems with access, inadequate reception and integration policies, these reforms nevertheless contributed to restoring refugees' trust in the system to some extent.

The hotspot approach

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2   AIDA (June 2013) National Country Report: Greece, p22 www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece

3   UNHCR Greece (2013) Syrians in Greece: Protection Considerations and UNHCR Recommendations www.refworld.org/pdfid/525418e14.pdf

4   Asylum Information Database, Greece Country Report June 2013 www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece; see also UNHCR (2014) 'Greece as a Country of Asylum' www.refworld.org/pdfid/54cb3af34.pdf

5   The NCHR is an independent institution providing advice and guidelines to the Greek State on human rights protection.

The reforms to the Greek asylum system must be seen in the context of the so-called refugee crisis of 2015 when almost one million people from Syria and other countries arrived in Greece via Turkey, mostly through the Eastern Aegean islands, and moved on through the mainland and Western Balkans to other EU States. This situation increased political pressure within the EU for a more restrictive asylum and immigration policy, which resulted in the 2016 EU–Turkey agreement. Under this agreement, all new irregular migrants arriving on Greece's islands – who would then be transferred to the 'hotspots' that operate on the major Eastern Aegean islands – would be returned to Turkey. Although the General Court of the European Union subsequently ruled the agreement not binding[6], Greek law and practice changed overnight in order to comply with the agreement's commitments.

RSD claims made on Greece's mainland are carried out on a meritbased, individualised basis, irrespective of an applicant's nationality. However, applications that are lodged on the Eastern Aegean islands by Syrians arriving from Turkey by sea after the entry into force of the agreement are examined on admissibility on the basis (set forth in the EU–Turkey agreement) that Turkey is a safe third country to which they can be returned. Until the end of 2019 applications by persons of non-Syrian nationalities (which have a recognition rate of higher than 25%) were rejected on inadmissibility grounds based on the above practice, although this began to change slightly in 2020. This practice is discriminatory and unfair, since the admissibility criterion is applied with respect to the applicant's nationality and date and point of entry.

Rejections of claims made by Syrians arriving from Turkey under the above scheme are made on the basis of a standard template decision which applies identical reasoning to each case and is based on a general, vague perception of safety. This runs counter to the requirements placed on States that applicants be treated equally, are not discriminated against, and have their personal fear of persecution or serious harm given appropriate consideration. Moreover, risk of *refoulement* is not seriously assessed and, as my own experience and others' findings show, many decisions are based on country of origin information (COI) that does not reflect the current political situation nor the actual treatment of refugees in Turkey. In addition, transit in Turkey that lasts merely a few weeks or months, without access to effective protection, is considered sufficient to establish an adequate link between the person and the transit country, resulting in rejection of the claim. This concept further distorts the true meaning of the 1951 Convention – which does not require that refugees arrive directly from their country of origin to the host country[7].

6   General Court of the European Union, 'Press release No 19.17' bit.ly/GeneralCourt-press-release-19-17

7   UNHCR (2017) Summary Conclusions on Non-Penalization for Illegal Entry or Presence: Interpreting and Applying Article 31 of the 1951 Refugee Convention www.refworld.org/docid/5b18f6740.html

In overturning some of these negative decisions, the independent Appeals Committees rebutted the presumption of safety in the light of the individual facts and circumstances of each case, and through a more careful assessment of available COI.

However, soon after the launch of the new asylum system, questions were raised about the fair and independent character of the authorities. A further reform in June 2016 introduced, among other aspects, restrictions on the right to a personal hearing on appeal, transfer of the competency for granting humanitarian status from the Appeals Committees to the Minister of the Interior, and undue pressure being placed on NCHR for very rapid recruitment of experts (and, where they were unable to comply within the timeframe required, appointments being made directly by the Minister). It also altered the composition of the independent Appeals Committees, whereby the two members of each Committee were to be administrative judges, with only one UNHCR/NCHR expert member remaining. Furthermore, expertise in asylum/immigration/human rights was downgraded from being a necessity for appointees to being an asset only. Committees are also now exempt from the obligation to submit periodic reports to the Greek Ombudsman, which raises concerns as to the effective control of the administration.

Eighteen members of the Committees – almost a third of total members – publicly complained about these reforms, calling into question the independence and impartiality of the new scheme and criticising the nonconformity of the EU–Turkey agreement with established European and international human rights legislation and decisions[8]. The replacement of experts with members of the judiciary who lack the required experience and expertise remains controversial. At the time of writing, the remaining expert member of the Appeals Committee has been replaced by a further administrative judge, meaning the composition is now fully judicial. The Greek Council of State has ruled the reforms to be in conformity with the Constitution and human rights. In so doing, it has accepted the legality of decisions based on an acceptance of Turkey as a safe country, which has generated considerable controversy among legal practitioners and academics.

Questions about EASO's role

After the EU–Turkey agreement, teams from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) were deployed in the Greek hotspots to provide assistance and expertise to the Greek Asylum Service in the management of asylum

8   https://thepressproject.gr/epistoli-melon-epitropis-prosfugon/

applications. However, their competencies have been significantly extended beyond their original remit. They now carry out admissibility interviews; conduct interviews as part of the regular procedure (examining the merits of claims); act as rapporteur within the Appeals Committees; issue opinions based on applicants' personal files; and carry out other application processing duties. Their role in the procedure creates fundamental rights challenges.

Based on the above, the European Ombudsman has expressed concerns about the extent of EASO staff involvement in assessing asylum applications in the hotspots and about the quality and procedural fairness of admissibility interviews. It has also found that, because of the de facto influence that EASO's involvement has on the decisions taken by EU Member States' asylum authorities (forbidden under EASO's founding Regulation), the organisation is being "encouraged politically to act in a way which is, arguably, not in line with its existing statutory role"[9]. Moreover, the fact that EASO staff do not have the same level of independence as do members of the Appeals Committees further undermines the procedural guarantees.

COVID-19 and other threats

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the suspension of RSD registration and interviews in Greece and created additional obstacles to effective legal aid and representation which have further affected the right to an effective remedy. The examination of pending appeals has continued despite the practical inability for applicants to meet with lawyers, and for asylum files to be obtained in good time and preparations made before the examination of the appeal. Despite this, lawyers report pressure being placed on them by caseworkers not to participate in interviews because of social distancing requirements, meaning some interviews may have taken place without applicants having legal representation. In the meantime, hundreds of applicants in the hotspots have had their claims rejected.

The restrictive approach to protection, as seen in the current RSD procedure and hotspot policy, goes hand-in-hand with Greece's ongoing construction of new closed camps – now as a response to the pandemic, and following the fires which destroyed Moria camp – its abolition of humanitarian status, and the further degradation in the quality and independence of the country's system. Recent press coverage hints at potential changes, including the asylum service becoming involved in the return of those whose asylum claims

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9   European Ombudsman 'Decision in case 735/2017/MDC', 7 July 2018 www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/decision/en/98711; see also FRA (2019) Update of the 2016 opinion of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights on fundamental rights in the 'hotspots' set up in Greece and Italy bit.ly/FRA-opinion-update-hotspots-2019

have been rejected. The Greek Vice-Minister of Immigration and Asylum has requested that the EU introduce a *refoulement* clause which can be applied by over-burdened frontline EU States at their own discretion[10]. For the time being, the EU turns a blind eye to the widespread reports of pushbacks in Greece and elsewhere in the EU. This demands reflection on how the need for a National Plan on Asylum and Migration for Greece emerged in the first place, and what steps need to be taken to assure the fairness and independence of its RSD now.

10   Aggelidis D 'Outrageous request to the EU for legalizing pushbacks', EfSyn, 5 June 2020 [in Greek] bit.ly/EFSYN-Aggelidis-05062020

An interdisciplinary collection of essays designed to map out a wide-ranging present and future of migration, integration, inclusion and symbiosis, in Greece and in Europe, this volume addresses selected topics of the current state of the field and points to significant challenges.

Integration is an ambivalent concept, often resting on the precarious and difficult balance between the need for recognition of diversity, which allows the migrant not to feel the object of contempt as a member of an 'other' culture, and the desire for assimilation, which is motivated from the legitimate aspiration to equal perspectives of social and professional advancement. The dominant 'integration' paradigm often generates exclusion, as it presupposes immobility, a condition not possible for many. Scholars highlight that the current policy framework and the governance system of migration and integration are excessively compartimentalised and missing a nexus. Such a policy gap is common to many European countries and has negative implications for economic and social integration as it leads to informal labour, segregated and marginalised living, and decreased access to education and health.

The contributors represent many of the fields affected by migration and forced displacement studies over the past two decades, including geography, political sciences, planning, sociology and social work. The need clearly emerges for local and national policy to give voice to those who are the recipients and should be beneficiaries of the integration decision making process.

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