Crisis encounters

Constructing the figure of the migrant-Other in post-2015 Greece

Vassilis Gerasopoulos

**Photo of the cover taken by the author*

Crisis Encounters

Constructing the figure of the migrant-Other in post-2015 Greece

Ontmoetingen in crisistijd:

De constructie van de migrant-Ander in Griekenland na 2015

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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Declaration

I declare that the research embodied in thesis is my own work and that the material contained herein has not been previously submitted at any other university.

I declare that I have not used commercial doctoral advisory services or any other sources of aid other than those listed in this thesis.

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Summary (English)

Arguably one of the most impactful European events of the recent years, the refugee 'crisis' of 2015 garnered considerable media attention and monopolized the political and public discourses for years. As has been repeatedly stipulated, nearly one million migrants passed through Greece in 2015, on their way to Northern Europe through the Western Balkan route, with more than 200.000 people crossing the Greek border in the month of October alone. The numbers, reports, images and debates around the wave of migration of 2015 mobilized a myth around the refugee 'crisis'. Namely that it is a 'crisis'- a never-before-seen occurrence, a shock, a unique moment in time. For all the potential advantages or disadvantages of such conception of 'crisis', the refugee 'crisis' signified a new encounter with the arriving migrant-Other. In this 'new' encounter, there were opportunities for a re-negotiation and reconfiguration of the relationships between the host society and the migrant-Other, and of the attitudes of the former towards the latter. As such, the objective of this study is to provide a tentative trajectory of how the figure of the 'refugee in need' of 2015 largely reverted to the figure of the 'illegal immigrant' within a few years. In this encounter with the migrant-as-stranger, I wish to explore the factors that influence the construction of the migrant-Other in the Greek context. Concretely, the main question of this study centers on: how did the refugee 'crisis' of 2015 affect and reshape the narratives that contributed to the production of the figure of the migrant-Other in contemporary Greece? In delineating an answer to that question, the following sub-questions are addressed:

- How did the legal and policy nexus utilized by the European Union and the Greek state to handle the migration 'crisis' contribute to the legitimation of othering and dehumanization?

- How and why were the initial responses of solidarity and humanitarianism retracted and what did these responses transform to?

- Which are the main nativist narratives employed to outline the figure of the internal and the external Others?

- How is the migrant-Other produced in the refugee 'crisis' different than the migrant-Others that came before?

Despite being a heavily researched issue migration remains highly relevant. This relevance is not only due to how timely and ever-present the matter of human mobility continues to be.

More importantly, and particularly for the Greek and the European context, the relevance should be linked to how persistently similar the response to human flows has remained. Instead of acknowledging the burgeoning research that has explored the migration policy shortcomings, instead of deconstructing the populist, nationalist and racist myths, and instead of capitalizing on the manifold benefits – material, financial and cultural – that can be reaped by the presence of migrants in a contemporary globalized society, the policy framework, the political discourse and public opinion on migration has remained surprisingly fixed on the same principles: deterrence, securitization, defensiveness, hostility, categorization of deservingness.

In attempting to provide satisfactory answers to the research questions, this thesis departs by discussing the methodological design of this study (Chapter 2). An overview of the methods chosen (semi-structured qualitative interviews, online ethnography and content analysis) is provided and sufficient focus is paid in the reasoning behind the choices made. Ethical issues are addressed, as well as an exploration of self-reflexivity. Following that, Chapter 3 touches upon the theoretical tenets of this study, attempting a combination and tailoring of theories and concepts that can eloquently describe the components that influence the interactions and relationships between the host society and the migrant-Other.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the analysis. Considerable space is provided in order to explicate how the migration policy framework explicitly and implicitly leads to the dehumanization of the migrating subject by entangling Greece in a policy dead-end – forcing the country to become a final destination for migrants and thus cultivating a perception of migration as a crisis that burdens the host society (Chapter 4). It is then argued that the legitimization of dehumanization that occurred throughout the first years of the refugee 'crisis' conditions the imagined relationship with the migrant-Other. Namely, the analyses of chapter 5 and 6 reflect upon the interactions between the host society and the incoming populations as a tidal movement: towards and away from the migrant-Other. The possibility of this encounter is heavily influenced by a culture of dehumanization, implicitly and explicitly articulated by the migration policy regime. This movement therefore operates on the basis of a dehumanized figure of the migrant-Other; encounters are governed by the essentializing effects of dehumanization whereby the figure of the migrant is streamlined, as either the idealized subject of solidarity or the demonized manifestation of threat and criminality. In both cases, the migrant-Other is constructed as a one-dimensional figure to symbolize need or illegality. Ultimately, Chapter 7 provides the conclusions of the analysis, delving deeper into the

deconstruction of the fragile and imagined superiority towards the migrant-Other as a pivotal moment for the proliferation of hostility towards the migrant-Other of the refugee ‘crisis’.

Summary (Dutch)

De vluchtelingencrisis van 2015 was ongetwijfeld een van de meest ingrijpende Europese gebeurtenissen van de afgelopen jaren. De crisis trok veel media-aandacht en domineerde jarenlang het politieke en publieke debat. Zoals herhaaldelijk vastgesteld, passeerden dat jaar bijna een miljoen migranten Griekenland op weg naar Noord-Europa via de Westelijke Balkanroute, waarbij alleen al in de maand oktober meer dan 200.000 mensen de Griekse grens overstaken. De cijfers, rapporten, beelden en debatten rond de migratiegolf van 2015 droegen bij aan het ontstaan van een mythe rond de vluchtelingen-'crisis', namelijk dat het een 'crisis' ís: een nooit eerder vertoonde gebeurtenis, een schok, een uniek moment in de tijd. De mogelijke voor- of nadelen van een dergelijke opvatting van 'crisis' daargelaten, betekende de vluchtelingencrisis een nieuwe ontmoeting met de arriverende migrant-Ander. In deze 'nieuwe' ontmoeting lagen kansen voor het opnieuw beschouwen en ‘heronderhandelen’ van de relaties tussen de gastsamenleving en de migrant-Ander, en van de houding van de gastsamenleving tegenover deze migrant-Ander.

Het doel van deze studie is om een eerste beeld te schetsen van hoe de figuur van de "vluchteling in nood" van 2015 binnen een paar jaar is veranderd in de figuur van de "illegale immigrant". In deze ontmoeting met de migrant-als-buitenstaander onderzoek ik de factoren die de constructie van de migrant-Ander in de Griekse context beïnvloeden. Concreet gaat het in deze studie om de vraag hoe de 'vluchtelingencrisis' van 2015 de narratieven, die bijdragen tot de constructie van de migrant-Ander in het hedendaagse Griekenland heeft beïnvloed en een nieuwe vorm heeft gegeven. Bij het formuleren van een antwoord op die vraag, komen de volgende subvragen aan bod:

- Hoe heeft de juridische en beleidsmatige aanpak van de migratiecrisis door de Europese Unie en de Griekse staat bijgedragen tot de legitimering van het anders-zijn en de dehumanisering van de migrant?

- Hoe en waarom zijn de aanvankelijke solidaire en humanitaire reacties omgeslagen in een achterdochtige en defensieve houding?

- Wat zijn de belangrijkste nativistische narratieven waarmee de interne en externe Ander worden gekenschetst?

- Hoe verschilt de migrant-Ander zoals die tijdens de vluchtelingencrisis wordt geconstrueerd, van migrant-Anderen zoals hiervóór gepercipieerd?

Hoewel naar migratie reeds veel onderzoek is verricht, blijft het onderwerp zeer relevant, niet alleen omdat mobiliteit van alle tijden is, maar belangrijker nog, omdat de reacties op die mobiliteit door de tijd heen zo opvallend overeenkomen, in het bijzonder binnen de Griekse en Europese context. In plaats van het florerende onderzoek over de tekortkomingen van het migratiebeleid serieus te nemen, in plaats van populistische, nationalistische en racistische mythen te deconstrueren, en in plaats van munt te slaan uit de vele - materiële, financiële en culturele - voordelen die de aanwezigheid van migranten in de hedendaagse, gemondialiseerde samenleving kan bieden, zijn het migratiebeleid, het politieke discours en de publieke opinie over migratie verrassend genoeg op dezelfde beginselen gefixeerd gebleven: afschrikking, *securitization* ('veiligheidsdenken'), een defensieve en vijandige houding, en het categoriseren van wie wél en niet internationale juridische bescherming verdienen.

Teneinde de onderzoeksvragen te kunnen beantwoorden, wordt in dit proefschrift eerst ingegaan op de methodologische opzet van dit onderzoek (hoofdstuk 2). Er wordt een overzicht gegeven van de gehanteerde methoden (semi-gestructureerde, kwalitatieve interviews, online etnografie en inhoudsanalyse) en de argumentatie achter de gemaakte keuzes wordt uiteengezet. Ethische kwesties en zelfreflexiviteit komen hier aan bod. Daarna worden in hoofdstuk 3 de theoretische uitgangspunten van deze studie behandeld. Theorieën en concepten worden zodanig toegepast en gecombineerd dat zij de interacties en relaties tussen de gastsamenleving en de migrant-ander inzichtelijk kunnen analyseren en duiden.

In de hoofdstukken 4, 5 en 6 wordt de analyse gepresenteerd. Er wordt uitgebreid stilgestaan bij de wijze waarop het migratiebeleid expliciet en impliciet leidt tot de dehumanisering van de aan dat beleid onderworpen migrant, door Griekenland de doodlopende weg in te sturen van het verworden tot een eindbestemming voor migranten, daarmee een perceptie cultiverend van migratie als een crisis die de gastsamenleving belast (hoofdstuk 4). Vervolgens wordt betoogd dat de legitimering van de dehumanisering die in de eerste jaren van de vluchtelingen-'crisis' plaatsvond, de verbeelde relatie met de migrant-Ander conditioneert. In de analyses van hoofdstuk 5 en 6 worden de interacties tussen de gastsamenleving en de binnenkomende bevolkingsgroepen namelijk beschouwd als de beweging van de getijden: *naar* en *weg van* de migrant-Ander. De mogelijkheid van deze ontmoeting wordt sterk beïnvloed door een cultuur van dehumanisering, impliciet en expliciet tot uitdrukking komend in het regime van het migratiebeleid. Deze beweging vindt dus plaats op grond van een gedehumaniseerde figuur van de migrant-Ander; ontmoetingen worden beheerst door de essentialiserende effecten van dehumanisering, waarbij de figuur van de migrant wordt gestroomlijnd als ofwel het

geïdealiseerde onderwerp van solidariteit, ofwel de gedemoniseerde verwezenlijking van dreiging en criminaliteit. In beide gevallen wordt de migrant-Ander geconstrueerd als een ééndimensionale figuur die symbool staat voor behoeftigheid of illegaliteit.

In hoofdstuk 7 worden ten slotte conclusies uit deze analyse getrokken. Hier wordt de fragiele en vermeende superioriteit ten opzichte van de migrant-Ander gedeconstrueerd als een onmisbaar element in het verspreiden van vijandigheid ten opzichte van de migrant-Ander in de vluchtelingen-'crisis'.

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everyone going home lost in thought?

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And some of our men just in from the border say

there are no barbarians any longer.

Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?

Those people were a kind of solution.[1]

[1] Excerpt from the poem "Waiting for the Barbarians" by C.P. Cavafy. From 'C.P. Cavafy: Collected Poems'. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (Princeton University Press, 1975). Available at: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51294/waiting-for-the-barbarians.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The beginning and the letter

During September of 2015, I was living in an apartment overlooking Victoria's square in Athens. For the better part of the summer and autumn of 2015, Victoria's square was the intermediate station for refugees that arrived in the port of Piraeus before taking the train from Larissis Station to the northern borders of Greece.[2] I would walk across the square on my way to the grocery store, the cigarette kiosk, or the bank, observing the area: migrant men and women sitting on the steps of surrounding buildings, the children playing around the poorly maintained fountain, the volunteers and NGO workers with their vests, dossiers and sunglasses, the police officers always standing on the edge of the square - unwilling to intervene or be a part of this vibrant 'rhythm' of the square. Some nights were marked by unrest – people yelling in different languages, cars speeding, glass breaking. My friend and I would rush to the balcony trying to understand whether this was just a heated discussion or a coordinated attack by far right extremists against the refugees. The morning after I would walk across the square again, seeing new faces engaged in similar mundane moments of the everyday. Around those city blocks in the center of Athens, the passing of time seemed to be organized by the arrival and departure of newcomers. One year later, with the inevitability of the 'refugee tragedy fatigue' (Bauman, 2016:2) fast approaching, the news, images and meanings pertaining to the 'refugee crisis' had already undergone many transformations – and more transformations were imminent. Victoria's square was no longer brimming with refugees, but the migrants crossing the Greek borders remained as controversial and 'present' as ever. To indulge in Cavafis' poetic formulation: what is going to happen to the Greeks if the barbarians do not come? What is going to happen if the barbarians do come? What could happen if the Greek encounters the barbarian-Other? What is the texture of the encounter? What is expected by this interaction and what comes out of it? And what contradicts or challenges the expectations of what the barbarian-Other should be, act or look like? The objective of this study is to provide a tentative trajectory of how the figure of the 'refugee in need' of 2015 largely reverted to the figure of

[2] Victoria's Square is situated in the city centre of Athens, a few blocks from the anarchist, solidarian neighbourhood of Exarchia, but also a few blocks from the offices of the Golden Dawn neo-nazi party and the neighbourhood of Agios Panteleimonas – the metaphorical breeding grounds of Golden Dawn after 2010 (Ellinas, 2013). Almost poetically, the geographical positioning of the square effectively placed it in the 'crossfire' of the two opposing groups. Larissis Station is the main train station of Athens, located approximately half a mile from Victoria's Square.

the ‘illegal immigrant’ within a few years. In this encounter with the migrant-as-stranger, I wish to explore the factors that influence the construction of the migrant-Other in the Greek context.

In early 2017, just a few months after undertaking my doctoral research, the profound complexities regarding the figure of the migrant-Other and his connection to the current afflictions of the Greek people became clear through the following story. One of my Facebook ‘friends’ had shared a post depicting a handwritten letter that a primary school teacher allegedly authored, protesting the enrollment of refugee children in Greek primary schools, together with all the other ‘benefits’ they and their families received. Brimming with inaccuracies, the letter was also written in a sensationalist, over-dramatized fashion. The comparison was set and demanded immediate answers: How can the conscious and patriotic Greek people accept the presence of non-Greek children in the classroom, whilst Greek children cannot afford to buy lunch? The argument makes little sense, creating a false ‘either-or’ dichotomy. The presence of refugee children in schools has nothing to do with the hardships of an average Greek family. Or does it?

Briefly commenting on the post, I attempted to underline the importance of not frivolously drawing connections between complex and disparate issues. I also urged this person to reconsider the validity of the supposed ‘handwritten letter’ and generally question the validity of their sources. Ultimately, I suggested they calmly accept our living amidst a mobile world of constant human movement, movement that is for millions a result of violent displacement caused by war, climate change and political turmoil rather than voluntary action.[3] Of these millions, 60.000 was the approximate number of asylum applicants in Greece during the time that this virtual ‘dialogue’ occurred (Papastergiou & Takou, 2019). Later that night, I received a long personal message that I consider to be the most poignant epitome of the anxieties and fears that were triggered by the arrivals of refugees in 2015. It arguably condenses most of the anti-migrant narratives that were fed by ill-conceived popular myths around the refugee ‘crisis’, embedded in the intersections of crises in the Greek and the European scenery, further fueled

[3]It is stipulated that the world “is witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record https://www.unpeacekeeping.live/www.un.org/en/sections/issuesdepth/refugees/index.html#:~:text=The%20world%20is%20witnessing%20the,under%20the%20age%20of%2018. An unprecedented 70.8 million people around the world have been forced from home by conflict and persecution at the end of 2018. Among them are nearly 30 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.”. See also https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html.

by the ever-growing disappointment by the State, projected to the most suitable target and expressed with hostility to said targets. The email read:

> *"War is a tragic thing, and I am as deeply sorry as anyone else for the families uprooted from their land for all the reasons you mentioned… There is a word: "purposefulness". I believe we should not mix the notion of 'human rights' with that word without a filter. I don't want you to focus on the isolated reaction of the teacher … but to observe the wider reality of the Greek situation and maybe you can, even implicitly, justify the frustrated letter.*
>
> *Yesterday, in Patission Avenue, a 16-year-old Greek boy took his last breath on a carton. He died in his sleep from starvation, after having spent the last two years living on the streets. I mentioned the word 'purposefulness' – you should keep it in mind. In schools, Greek children are starving, and several organizations are mobilized and they are offering, thank God, what the Greek family cannot offer. A family cannot offer its offspring not even a SIMPLE LUNCH. The percentage of such families… goes up to 41%. There are 240 Greek children in the Chatzikiriakio Institution [an orphanage in Piraeus] because of a death of a parent or due to the inability of the family to provide food…*
>
> *Unfortunately, I believe that refugees should be taken by countries that can 'absorb' them… countries with primary surplus, with financial prosperity; countries without problems involving the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank, countries without a debt that has an expected re-payment plan of more than two centuries. All these coincidences make me return to the word I mentioned before. The PURPOSEFULNESS of developments in many aspects indicates a cold war, a war of ethical and financial character; a war, crucially, insidious. They are taking advantage of our good conscience and our kindness when it comes to the issue of migrants. Why weren't we flooded with 'LATHROMETANASTES'[illegal immigrants] in 1999, after the war in Iraq? Why won't any other State in the Middle East, where they also share their religion, provide them with refuge?... Why do full ships keep coming and abandoning people in the middle of the sea, taking away the motor of the ship and leaving them to wander until the patrols find them? Why are they destroying our churches and defecating on the sacred symbols of our faith? PURPOSEFULNESS hides behind the laws…*

I believe that the Greek government should first nourish and honor and find solutions for its own children. After that, with whatever resources left, the government can try to provide for others, as much as possible. But not the other way around. It seems then that they purposefully bring the 'lathrometanastes' here. They purposefully provide welfare to them and not to starving Greek youth. The well-dressed and well-educated [politicians] purposefully proclaim the laws, demanding compliance from the suppressed and hungry Greek folk… They have to understand that we have, first of all, the right to rebuild our homeland, strengthen our spirit and gather what is left of us before helping our fellow man." [4]

The recurring invocation of a 'purposeful' agenda against the crisis-ridden Greek people illustrates a profound and unsettling fear. What can also be observed is a sense of powerlessness – a frustration that is born by the inability to control or mitigate the seemingly endless hardships and afflictions that plague the Greek people. The fear and powerlessness are connected through a thread of persistent uncertainty that manifests as a pervasive existential insecurity extending from the present to the future. Reflecting on this email, the words of Bauman (2007:26) came to mind: "*Fear is arguably the most sinister of the demons nesting in the open societies of our time. But it is the insecurity of the present and uncertainty about the future that hatch and breed the most awesome and least bearable of our fears. That insecurity and that uncertainty, in their turn, are born of a sense of impotence: we seem to be no longer in control, whether singly, severally or collectively*". Against this backdrop, an obsession with the tightness of the nation's frontiers and the security of the individuals located within reflects an overwhelming unease and bewilderment towards the influx of migrants.

1.2 What 'crisis'?

Arguably one of the most impactful European events of the recent years, the refugee 'crisis' of 2015 garnered considerable media attention and monopolized the political and public discourses for years. As has been repeatedly stipulated, nearly one million migrants passed through Greece in 2015, on their way to Northern Europe through the Western Balkan route, with more than 200.000 people crossing the Greek border in the month of October alone (UNHCR, 2022). The accumulated numbers of incoming populations reported in 2015 marked

[4] This 'letter' was originally in Greek and has been translated by the author, as have all other Greek sources referenced in this work. I have made efforts to keep the balance between accurate translation and original meaning, given the linguistic discrepancies and the idiomatic words and phrases frequent and unique to the Greek vernacular. Whenever it is necessary I shall explicate in footnotes the multiple, nuanced, or implicit meanings of Greek words and phrases, the complexity of which might not be fully captured by a direct translation.

the largest ever annual flow of asylum seekers to Europe, eclipsing the migration waves that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1992 and the uptick in asylum applications during the Kosovo conflicts in the late 1990's. Given that the overall number of asylum applications since the mid-1980 numbers at approximately 12 million, the 1.3 million applications of 2015 indicate that one out of ten asylum seekers crossing European borders throughout the last three decades did so during 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2016a). Defining moments of that year, labeled as 'turning points' from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2015), would include the horrific deaths of almost 600 people whose boat capsized on April 18 while attempting to reach the Italian shores, the recovery of 71 bodies in a refrigeration truck found abandoned during late August near the Austrian border with Hungary, and the morbid photographs of the body of young Aylan Kurdi washed up on the Turkish shoreline. As such, the year was replete with images of suffering and tragedy that mobilized public sentiment.

But the numbers, reports, images and debates had a more significant consequence: they mobilized a myth around the refugee 'crisis'. Namely that it is a 'crisis'- a never-before-seen occurrence, a shock, a unique moment in time. The migratory movement of 2015 was accompanied by a considerable focus on the present, an obsession with the alleged novelty of the migratory movement, its intensity and magnitude, its persistent 'now-ness'. This focus on the present 'crisis' stands as the point of departure for the exploration that follows because it precipitates a confrontation with the migrant-Other that is predicated on all the connotations that the designation of a 'crisis' brings forward. Perceiving the summer of 2015 as a trigger for an unprecedented 'crisis' paves the way for fallacious conjecture, namely the dichotomizing of the realities of 'before' and 'after'. Such dichotomies have the unique quality to both oversimplify and obfuscate the complexity of loaded socio-political junctures such as the 'refugee crisis'. However, what raises valid concern is how the border regime seems to be structurally ridden by moments of crisis – where stability is merely temporal and can never be taken for granted (Hess & Kasparek, 2017). If anything, recent years have shown that crisis is nothing but extraordinary. It is a kaleidoscope - with different crises overlapping, co-existing, inescapably leading to even more crises (Siegel, 2022; see also Siegel & Nagy, 2018). Instead, the 'crisis' should, as has been done by many, be scrutinized and deconstructed as a factor dictating and legitimizing exceptional responses. The description of a situation as 'crisis' warrants a significant unpacking of the nuances of the term. Namely, how it engages in a rhetoric of 'collapse of control' using the notions of 'flows', 'waves' or 'streams' – phenomena

that are presumed to lie outside the realm of human intervention (Kasparek, 2016). 'Crisis' evokes a reliving of a 'frame-breaking moment' (Carastathis *et al*., 2018), it pinpoints a pre-existing and much desirable normality (Tsilimpounidi, 2017), and it conveniently omits the persistence of deep-rooted problems that were present long before the title of 'crisis' came about (Drymioti and Gerasopoulos, 2018; Papataxiarchis, 2017). 'Crisis' also carries medical connotations, insinuating a critical state of the ailing body and highlighting a "temporality of the imminent and the urgent" within which the supervision (management) of life is at stake (Athanasiou, 2012:45; Habermas, 1973). Balancing between the medical vocabulary of 'critical' and the religious theology of a 'time of reckoning', 'crisis' announces a temporal shift that urges a 'time of judgment'.[5] Beyond shaping the migration flows of 2015 with a texture of emergency, the focus on 'crisis' also contributes to an essentializing of the migrant-Other. Such essentialism leads to the fetishization of the migrant-Other as a stranger, overlooking the dynamics "of inclusion and exclusion, or incorporation and expulsion, that constitute the boundaries of bodies and communities" (Ahmed, 2000:6). In other words, the production of the migrant-Other as a refugee that arrived during a 'crisis' fails to acknowledge the complex histories of displacement and mobility, eventually building a relationship with the refugee-as-Other that is as fragile as it is superficial.

The skepticism towards the notion of crisis, which is central to the exploration that will follow, goes well beyond the discursive realm. It is also in the political realm that the narrative of 'crisis' proves misleading. Therefore, what should be made clear from the beginning is that:

> "*there was no refugee crisis in Europe. One million people do not constitute a crisis – it is ridiculous to even say it… If anything, Europe experienced a reception crisis, a crisis of the legal framework of reception and allocation – and, further, a crisis of democracy, a crisis of the so-called European acquis*" (R27)

The term 'refugee crisis', when referring to 2015, should be treated as a euphemism, a product of ideology and not of reality (Spyropoulou & Christopoulos, 2016). It is thus the invocation of a refugee 'crisis' that has set in motion various responses and moral panics (Bauman, 2016) as well the considerable 'condensation' of political time (Fotiadis, 2017) and acceleration of drastic change (Burckhardt, 1979), legitimizing the policies and politics of emergency and exception.

[5] Here, Athanasiou (2012) effectively utilizes the etymological and discursive field of the language. In Greek, the word *κρίση* (krisi) has both meanings: that of 'crisis' and that of (deliberate, well-thought of) 'decision'.

1.3 Migrations and other crises: Greece at the onset of the refugee 'crisis'

A preliminary step in the unpacking of the refugee 'crisis' lies in situating its arrival within the wider sociopolitical scenery of Greece in the summer of 2015, a process that shall uncover the pre-existence of other 'crises', the combination of which culminated in the labelling of the migration flows as a refugee 'crisis' in the Greek context. These underlying dynamics - the components so to speak - of the migration 'crisis' should be briefly outlined as they function as the foundation upon which the co-existence of the Greek people and the migrants lies upon, and also as the precursor for what was to follow.

The notion of 'crisis' has followed Greece for over a decade. In April 2010, then Prime Minister Giorgos Papandreou addressed the Greek people from the small, picturesque island of Kastelorizo declaring that, in order to save the country, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) rescue mechanism was activated (Youtube, 2010). Insufficient GDP (gross domestic product) growth, problematic budget compliance, high government debt and excessive spending, the propensity of Greek politics towards over-expansive and populism-driven fiscal policies, the country's weak supply side and its below-par institutional performance, and issues of tax evasion and corruption are just some of the contributing factors to the Greek debt crisis (Arghyrou, 2015; Drymioti & Gerasopoulos, 2018). The fiscal and economic crisis quickly mutated into a political and social one. As the country faced six consecutive years of recession and three Memoranda of Understanding, the unemployment rates skyrocketed, reaching a peak of 27.5% in 2013, while the public debt to GDP ratio climbed from 109% to 177% in 2014 (Arghyrou, 2015). Simultaneously, debates over the possibility or feasibility of the country's exit from the European Economic and Monetary Union (the so-called 'Grexit') were frequent enough to cause considerable political upheaval, equating to four general elections and six cabinet changes from 2009 to early 2015 (with a fifth national election in September 2015).

During these years, the neo-Nazi political party Golden Dawn saw a substantial increase in electoral support, with its number of voters rising from approximately 20.000 in the general elections of 2009 to almost 450.000 in the general elections of May 2012 and 425.000 in the elections of June 2012, leading to their gain of 18 seats in the Greek Parliament (Ellinas, 2013). The party held on to its electoral support in the two national elections of 2015, consistently securing 7% of the national vote, even though the trial of Golden Dawn as a criminal

organization had been underway since April 2015.[6] The causal connection between the austerity crisis and the rise of Golden Dawn has been repeatedly criticized or rejected as being overly simplistic (Carastathis, 2015; Dinas *et al.*, 2016; Kirtsoglou, 2013), and a more careful look will instead indicate how the continuation and intensification of austerity measures expectedly "disrupted the clientelist networks that major parties had used to distribute patronage, especially public-sector jobs, and limited the resources they had at their disposal" (Ellinas, 2013:556). Such developments, Ellinas (2013) argues, alienated the electoral base that had long sustained the bipartisan, clientelist system that characterized the Greek political arena since the 1970s, and facilitated the defection of voters to other parties thus paving the way for the emergence of radical forms of political participation. Golden Dawn effectively occupied this political 'space' by attracting voters from a combination of constituencies (both urban and rural) who were inclined to vote punitively as a manifestation of their dissatisfaction with the previous governments' subjugation to the European institutions (Georgiadou, 2019). Golden Dawn leaned heavily on the idea of a "nationalist solution" that would bring about "national rebirth" (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou, 2015). It propagated a worldview of rigid racial inequality and proclaimed to stand "*against the demographic alteration, through the millions of illegal immigrants, and the dissolution of Greek society*" (Ellinas, 2013:549). However, while Golden Dawn attempted to capitalize upon the anti-austerity frustration by espousing an anti-immigration agenda that was congruent to its ultra-nationalist ideology, it is crucial to note that its trajectory from the societal margins to the National Parliament is not a story of polarizing, anti-systemic attitudes. It was rather Golden Dawn's ability to replace the State in providing public goods at urban neighborhoods and in building bridges and bonds with local communities – an exemplification of grassroots politics (Dinas *et al*., 2016).

Alongside the financial and political turbulence, the early 2010s were a period of blatant anti-immigration policies, systemic racism, and alarmingly frequent racially aggravated violence. The city streets were a hostile and considerably dangerous environment for migrants - as a migrant from Pakistan recounts:

[6] The trial of the Golden Dawn started on April 20th 2015 and joined several cases of allegations brought against various Golden Dawn supporters (notably the murder of Pavlos Fyssas) and, most importantly, united all these cases under the accusations of Golden Dawn's operation as a criminal organization. In October 2020, the Court ruled that Golden Dawn lawmakers had indeed operated a criminal organization under the guise of being a democratically elected party and the public prosecutor proposed lengthy prison terms for 57 of the 69 defendants (including the party's leader and 6 more prominent Golden Dawn figures who had served as Parliament Members) convicted of murder, assault, weapons possession and participating in the criminal outfit. See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/14/greece-golden-dawn-neo-nazi-prison-sentences.

> *"When fascist attacks started happening in 2009, no one expected that daily beatings and murders would become so common by 2011. Whenever an incident of racist violence took place, we quickly realized that we have to first alert the anti-fascist organisations and then the police. The police did not help, they would not even let us file a lawsuit and instead of the attacker, they were apprehending the victim. Police officers themselves were telling us: we are Golden Dawn [supporters] , we will come for you anywhere you go, don't you ever believe that you can feel safe*" (R36)

These developments should not be solely attributed to the emergence of Golden Dawn, even though the indulgence of violence was a central aspect in framing the party as radical and anti-establishment. These developments also failed to coincide with a surge in the number of migrants coming to Greece. Broadly speaking, a periodization of migration flows to Greece until the early 2010s can be divided in three waves (Georgiadou *et al*., 2017).[7] The first, occurred in the early 1990's and mostly consisted of Albanians, the second occurred in the late 1990's and saw the arrival of migrants from Balkan and former USSR countries. During the 2000's, an increase of migration from Middle Eastern and Asian countries (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Afghanistan) signified the third wave. Until the eruption of the financial crisis, the factors that rendered Greece an attractive destination included the country's European Union membership, its democratic regime, and its relative economic prosperity (Triandafyllidou, 2010). Therefore, in the early 2010s there was no increase in migrant influxes that could be blamed for the proliferation of anti-immigration rhetoric and policy. This proliferation should be regarded as a multidimensional phenomenon, predominantly stemming from the Greek State's long-standing resistance against creating a coherent and cohesive migration policy and asylum system. A history of the Greek migration policy since the 1990's (and by 'policy' here I refer both to the legal framework and the institutional practices) readily reveals how previous governments have fostered and encouraged racism and xenophobia, how they have demonstrated a lack of political will to devise and adopt a proactive legal framework for migration, and have instead utilized migration policy as a tool that enables the perpetuation of orientalist stereotypes, re-producing a crypto-colonial eagerness to safeguard the borders of Europe as an affirmation of the country's importance for European security (Baldwin-Edwards,

[7] It has been argued that Greece has been less 'mature' in dealing with the migration flows – compared to Western European States that became receiving countries as early as the third quarter of the 20th century (Arango, 2009; Bail, 2008). This lack of 'maturity' can be viewed as one of the factors influencing the emergence and extend of anti-immigrant attitudes.

2004, 2014; Hamilakis, 2016; Kiprianos *et al*., 2003; Lefkaditou, 2017; Triandafyllidou, 2009; Triandafyllidou *et al*., 2013).

Amidst the inflammatory political scenery of 2012, the aforementioned dynamics should be viewed in tandem with the government's efforts to articulate an anti-immigrant profile (by highlighting migration as the most imminent danger for the Greek society) that would be potent enough to attract the electorate they considered susceptible to the Golden Dawn's rhetoric and to deflect to the far-right as a reaction to the austerity struggles. In campaigning for the national elections of 2012, the leader of the conservative party Antonis Samaras promised to cleanse the city streets of migrants:

> *"Greece today has become a centre for illegal immigrants. We must take back our cities, where the illegal trade in drugs, prostitution and counterfeit goods is booming*" (Human Rights Watch, 2013:12).

Shortly after, Samaras became Prime Minister and launched the ironically named operation 'Xenios Zeus' that envisaged the deterrence of illegal immigration by sealing the border with Turkey, identifying undocumented migrants in urban centres, and remaking Athens as a city of law and order with improved quality of life for residents and visitors alike (Human Rights Watch, 2013:13). In its implementation however, 'Xenios Zeus' was an inhumane and abusive crackdown on migrants consisting of unlawful identity checks, ethnic profiling, physical and verbal abuse and arbitrary deprivations of liberty. In defending 'Xenios Zeus', then Minister of Public Order, Nikos Dendias, infamously claimed: "*The country is disappearing. The country has not faced an invasion of such magnitude since the Dorian invasion 4,000 years ago … this is a bomb placed at the foundations of society and the state*" (cited in Papastergiou & Takou, 2014:13). Dendias also argued that the "immigration problem may be even greater than the economic one" in an explicit attempt to shift the center of attention and blame from the government to the migrants (Iefimerida, 2012). Any meaningful agenda on immigration was stumbling upon its utilization as a trigger for moral panics. The road for the normalization of dehumanization and systemic racism was paved with the persistent apprehensiveness and denial of the Greek State to effectively manage the influxes persisted.[8] The period of 'national disillusionment' and 'crisis nationalism' that commenced in 2010, following the period of

[8] It is noteworthy that in 2011 a prominent figure of the New Democracy party – who eventually became a member of the Greek Parliament – was publicly stating that "border protection cannot exist without [collateral] damage and, to make myself clear, without deaths… when you [migrants] are here there will be no welfare provisions, you will not be able to eat or drink or go to the hospital… Hell must feel like heaven compared to what they go through here [in Greece]". See https://left.gr/news/otan-o-pleyris-zitoyse-nekroys-metanastes-sta-synora-vinteo

defensive nationalism of the 1990s and the period of national optimism of the 2000's (Georgiadou *et al*., 2017), was reflected in the anti-immigration crescendo of 2012 and 2013 which resulted in dozens of violent attacks against migrants that went largely unpunished (Racist Violence Recording Network Report, 2012) and trivialized racist discourse and action and further desensitized the public.

1.4 Some notes on terms and terminology

The figure of the migrant produced in the years of political and economic crises is that of the '*lathrometanastis*' – which I previously translated as 'illegal' immigrants. However, it is crucial to realize that the term carries more sinister, derogatory, and dehumanizing connotations. The pretext 'lathro' does not only pertain to a legally framed illegality but rather existentially envelops the migrant. More precisely, the pretext attacks the very humanity of the migrant subject by reducing their existence to their illegality and denying their value outside and beyond that illegality. The proliferated and long sustained use of the term in political and media discourse – invoked for decades by mainstream politicians and media outlets – became sedimented in the years preceding the migration 'crisis' and emblematic of the Golden Dawn rhetoric. The ramifications of the sedimentation of the term should not be taken lightly, as it contributed to a normalization and trivialization of a word that essentially dehumanized migrants and produced a 'numbing' effect towards this process of dehumanization.

Adjacent to this discursive clarification on 'lathrometanastis', two more clarifications are warranted here, which might not practically elucidate the issues at hand, but at the very least function as guiding posts for the analysis that will follow. Firstly, throughout this thesis, in referring to the abstract notion of the 'migrant-Other' when, the subject is not specifically or contextually defined in terms of gender, I am inclined to refer to the migrant as a 'he'. Greek is a gendered language – and the gender of the subject is many times apparent even in plural. Namely, in the common racist utterances that usually use plural pronouns, "look at *them*'', "all of *them* economic immigrants", the malicious 'them' is crucially always masculine. I am of course aware that, in an important section of the literature on migration, race and Otherness, the migrant subject is often referred to with 'she/her' pronouns – especially in queer and feminist scholarship, and I consider this choice a laudable manifestation of radical solidarity and empowerment. However, given that the very core of this dissertation examines the processes and myths behind 'othering', the assigning of the migrant-Other as male, as essentialist as it may be, alludes to the very real processes of persistent stereotyping. Before

deconstructing stereotypes, one should engage and deeply understand their origins and contributing factors – that is one of the aims of this thesis to begin with. 'He' – the signifier of a (male) threatening figure of the migrant-Other - acts a constant reminder that the category of Migrant is loaded with imagery, affect and Manichean binaries.

Secondly, when referring to migrants, I use interchangeably 'migrants', 'migrant-Others', 'immigrants' or 'refugees'. Of course, a delineation and clarification of the differences between refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants is provided, and whenever it is important to the argument or the story a specific term is preferred. However, I believe that the interchangeability stands realistic and true to the indeterminacy and flexibility of the categories under study. Simultaneously, similar to the aspect of gender, the interchangeability reflects the tendency to generalize, homogenize and uncritically erase the lines that separate the terms – a process destructive in its indifference as opposed to being deconstructive or resistant to positivist divisions. As it will be shown throughout this work, for many Greeks the refugee, the asylum seeker, and the economic immigrant - whilst distinct – often conflate and collapse under one label: the Other.

1.5 Research objectives and relevance

It is amidst this intersection of political developments, human flows and 'crises' that the refugee influx of 2015 emerged. Despite the grim picture painted by Greece's checkered past, the refugee 'crisis' signified a new encounter with the migrant-Other. In this 'new' encounter, there were opportunities for a re-negotiation and reconfiguration of the relationships between the host society and the migrant-Other, and of the attitudes of the former towards the latter. These opportunities materialized in the call for solidarity for refugees that was pervasive for the better part of 2015, and in the effort to find what connects, rather than what separates the Greek people from migrants. However, the refugee 'crisis' also temporally followed a financial crisis which invited the deconstruction of the imagined national image and a political crisis that bolstered anti-immigrant stereotyping. These contradicting forces open a space for exploration and raise interesting questions on the modalities of the construction of the migrant-Other. The dynamics of xenophobic stereotyping - oscillating between a nationalist defensiveness and an imagined superiority towards migrants – are intertangled with the voices that proclaim the need to welcome refugees fleeing war and tragedy. The consequences of the refugee 'crisis' in the Greek society should also be analyzed in acknowledgement of the strengthening and proliferation of populist far-right discourses and electoral support across the European

sociopolitical scenery. Therefore, as indicated in the beginning, the objective of this study is to trace these simultaneous and sometimes opposing dynamics to provide a trajectory of how the figure of the 'refugee' of 2015 largely reverted to the figure of the 'illegal immigrant' by the end of 2019. In this encounter with the migrant-as-stranger, I wish to explore the factors that influence the production of the migrant-Other in the Greek context. Along with the focus on a specific context that demands a careful adaptation of existing theories and concepts in ways that make sense for the case under study, another driving force of this dissertation is the constant interactionist lens. Namely, an analysis that will operate on the discursive interaction between Otherness and Greekness and attempt to trace the dialectical processes of constructing the migrant-as-Other (otherness) and, by extension, as ontologically different and distant from the collectively imagined figure of the 'Greek'. This conceptual tenet is crucial in narrowing down the field of analysis whilst also allowing the capture of an incessantly dynamic negotiation.

Concretely, the main question of this study centers on: **how did the refugee 'crisis' of 2015 affect and reshape the narratives that contributed to the production of the figure of the migrant-Other in contemporary Greece**? In delineating an answer to that question, the following sub-questions will be addressed:

- How did the legal and policy nexus utilized by the European Union and the Greek state to handle the migration 'crisis' contribute to the legitimation of othering and dehumanization?
- How and why were the initial responses of solidarity and humanitarianism retracted and what did these responses transform to?
- Which are the main nativist narratives employed to outline the figure of the internal and the external Others?
- How is the migrant-Other produced in the refugee 'crisis' different than the migrant-Others that came before?

Despite being a heavily researched issue migration remains highly relevant. This relevance is not only due to how timely and ever-present the matter of human mobility continues to be. More importantly, and particularly for the Greek and the European context, the relevance should be linked to how persistently similar the response to human flows has remained. Instead of acknowledging the burgeoning research that has explored the migration policy

shortcomings, instead of deconstructing the populist, nationalist and racist myths, and instead of capitalizing on the manifold benefits – material, financial and cultural – that can be reaped by the presence of migrants in a contemporary globalized society, the policy framework, the political discourse and public opinion on migration has remained surprisingly fixed on the same principles: deterrence, securitization, defensiveness, hostility, categorization of deservingness. By the end of 2018, even though the majority of Greek people were supporting the idea of taking in refugees fleeing persecution and war (69%), a considerable 82% of those asked were in favor of allowing less migrants to move to Greece (Pew Research Centre, 2018a; 2018b). This paradox, whilst telling of the solidarian reflexes of the Greek society, reveals an important tension: how can these two trends be bridged? How clear can the demarcation between those who flea persecution and those who 'just' migrate be? And, ultimately, how fragile is such demarcation?

By employing a qualitative methodological design, this thesis will argue that in the unique sociopolitical juncture of 2015 and the years that followed, the migrant-Other was a figure constituting a significant existential threat to the host society – and a figure equally essentialized and not understood. As a reflection of the Self, the encounter with the migrant-Other intensifies fears over the future that is uncertain; thus inviting the anthropophagic need (Young, 1999) to ascertain that the 'Other' will remain an 'Other' – lesser than and outside of.

1.6 Thesis structure

Following this introductory contextualization of the Greek situation before the eruption of the refugee 'crisis' and outlining of the aims of this study, chapters 2 and 3 respectively discuss and substantiate the methodological and theoretical choices.

Chapter 2 begins by outlining the epistemological position adopted in this study, before explaining the qualitative approach chosen and delineating the data collection methods employed (semi-structured interviews, social media ethnography and policy documents analysis). Following a description of the modalities of access, interviewing and data analysis, the chapter concludes by touching upon issues of triangulation and engaging with self-reflexivity and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 3 elaborates on concepts and theories that guide the analysis. Initially, the concepts of the state of exception and governmentality are discussed, and the notion of dysnomie is outlined as a beneficial tool to ground and trace the dynamics and consequences of emergency and exception. Further, the figure of the 'Other' is theoretically substantiated – in opposition to the notion of imagined Greekness. The main aspects and the significant pitfalls of solidarity and humanitarianism as metaphorical movements *towards* the Other are explored, before discussing the meaning and merit of nativism as an encompassing frame for the narratives that justify the movement *away* from the Other. The nativist framework is chosen for its flexibility in delineating the duality of the categories of the native vs. the non-native, and the constant underlying dynamic of comparison it implies.

The structure of the analytical chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) broadly follows the theoretical and conceptual framework adopted. The analysis chapters aim to diligently trace the trajectory of othering – its legitimation, cultivation, rationalization, and substantiation.

Chapter 4 touches upon the legal and policy nexus that came into effect during the years of the refugee 'crisis'. It aims to expose and substantiate the links between policy, controversial implementation, and the subsequent mobilization of negative and hostile sentiment towards migrants. The analysis predominantly deals with institutional actors – both in the European and the national level, and, as such, it combines macro and meso components in describing and explaining the legitimization of othering in a manner that takes into consideration the Greek policy and political context. The connections between biopolitical policies and anti-immigration societal attitudes are not taken as a direct or obvious progression but are tentatively unpacked as a complex, multifactorial process that paves the way for the dehumanization of the incoming populations. Concretely, the chapter embarks on an exploration of how the vocabulary of emergency is articulated in key policy texts addressing the European Union's response to the migration 'crisis'. Upon that, a threefold division of the state of exception tailored in the Greek context is purported: exception as comfort, exception as bargain and exception as entrapment. This chapter culminates by considering the elusive notion of responsibility and accountability in the dysnomic scenery of exception that renders migration a constant, unresolved crisis.

Chapter 5 begins by explicating the importance of the solidarity and humanitarian wave but also the nuanced meanings these concepts acquired on the ground – as reciprocal or material relations between the refugees and the host society. The prolongation of the crisis conditions

and the ways in which Greece became the last destination for the refugees is analyzed as a rupture point for the initial welcoming culture, and as a trigger for a renewed suspicion and hostility towards the undeserving migrant-Other. It is argued that the frustration engendered by the prolongation becomes a crucial impediment to solidarity as a movement towards the migrant-Other. Subsequently, the pre-occupation with the differentiation between refugees and (illegal) migrants, together with the changing demographics of the migrant influx are explored as the main reflections of this suspicion. In the gradual deconstruction of solidarity, the arguments discussed in this chapter reflect an indirect aversion to the migrant-Other that is neutralized as being a legitimate, sensible concern.

Chapter 6 looks to critically explore the array of nativist narratives through which the dichotomization between the Greek (as native) and the migrant-Other (as non-native) is constructed. The growing mistrust towards the pro-refugee government of SYRIZA and the sedimentation of the political establishment's unreliability to protect the country's interests is explored as a key factor in the debasing of solidarity through the designation of political figures as internal Others. The thorny issue of welfare provisions to asylum seekers is also analyzed as another crucial factor contributing to the escalation of the long-sustained narrative of the undeserving, idle migrant. The fallacious connections drawn between the economic crisis and the presence of migrants as a financial burden to the country are also addressed. Furthermore, the persistent, essentializing narratives of migrant criminality and islamophobia are discussed as crucial components of the myth of incompatibility and cultural racism and, more importantly, as tenets of the exclusive and imagined superiority of the community of Greekness.

The final conclusion revisits the main arguments of the analytical chapters and provides an answer to the main question posed – namely, what are the most salient features in the production of the migrant-Other. It will be argued that the arrival and the co-existence of migrants within the host society engendered a recurring, undesirable comparison between the natives (who were already dreading their materially, symbolically, and ontologically insecure position), and the non-native, that ultimately served as a destabilizing factor for the already fragile myths of national superiority.

Chapter 2

Methodological reflections

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe the paths navigated when researching the refugee 'crisis'. Throughout the fieldwork, alongside originality and relevance, the primary concern was how to offer well-founded insight on methodological dilemmas and researcher positionality, and how to negotiate the challenging choices that emerge in the field. It was also important to consider how and why research should be conducted on a specific aspect of the migration phenomenon – the construction of the migrant as Other - which has not previously been held at the center of academic/criminological attention when compared to studies about crimes of solidarity, migrant smuggling and trafficking networks, migration governance and securitization or refugee trajectories. The importance of qualitative research and the value of a thick description was also paramount (Geertz, 1973). In the digital era, where technological advancements and 'statistical testing' permeate academic research and typically encourage positivistic methodological choices towards paths of 'measurable' or 'applicable' results, a cultural criminological gaze is more valuable than ever.

What will follow below is a brief outline of the epistemological approach of this work and a delineation of the overall research design. The research process will then be explained in detail, with sufficient attention being paid to methods of data collection and strategies of access, sampling, and analysis. Ethical considerations regarding privacy and confidentiality are also addressed in line with the respective methodologies employed. A final discussion considers the notions of validity, reliability, and triangulation, and highlights some influential factors encountered in the methodological trajectory of the research.

2.2 Epistemological approach

Before discussing the methodological procedures, techniques, and strategies employed in the research, it is worth considering the epistemological orientation of this study, the base "*assumption about how to know the social and apprehend its meaning*" (Fonow & Cook, 1991:1). In researching a topic as mutable as the construction of the migrant-Other in political and public discourse, social constructionism and symbolic interactionism are potent

epistemological positions[9], taking into consideration the malleability of identity categories and the importance of language and discourse.

Social constructionism advocates an approach to knowledge through the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world they are in, and their own place within it (Gergen, 1985). Constructionism thus "views discourse about the world not as a reflection or map of the world but as an artifact of communal interchange" (Gergen, 1985: 266). These social artifacts are produced by historically situated interchanges between individuals; they are the result of an "active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship" (Gergen, 1985:267). In other words, "all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices… and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998: 42). Simply put, facts become relevant through the representation and construction of their meaning; social reality is a changing concept and there are multiple diversified constructions of reality (Golafshani, 2003). In this regard, Rorty's (1989) exploration of ironism and contingency are quite befitting, in that he envisioned a general turn against theory and towards narrative. Such a turn would amount to what he termed as:

> "*the 'contingency of language' - the fact that there is no way to step outside the various vocabularies we have employed and find a meta-vocabulary which somehow takes account of all possible vocabularies, all possible ways of judging and feeling*" (Rorty, 1989: XVI).

Symbolic interactionism similarly considers how human beings "act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them" (Blumer, 1969:2). These meanings arise out of processes of social interaction and are modified through an interpretative process via which individuals symbolically interact with one another (Blumer, 1969). Human beings *construct* the worlds of experience that they live in, and the meanings of these worlds are molded through interaction as well as the reflections that individuals bring into situations (Denzin, 1990). For interactionists, such processes are firmly anchored in the "circuit of culture" whereby meanings are defined by both traditional and new forms of mass media, and identities are represented in terms of salient cultural categories (du Gay *et al.,* 1997:3). Interactionists prefer to ask 'how' rather than 'why' questions; they study narratives and systems of discourse – stipulating that

[9] Gergen (1985) makes a conscious choice in discussing 'constructionism' instead of 'constructivism'. The writer argues that while the two terms might be used interchangeably, the latter mainly invokes the developmental psychology tradition of Jean Piaget as well as a significant art movement of the 20th century. 'Constructionism' is thus preferred to avoid unnecessary confusion while maintaining a link to the seminal work of Berger and Luckman (1966).

these structures give coherence and meaning to everyday life. Congruent with a Foucauldian approach, whereby discursive systems simultaneously summarize and produce knowledge about the world (Foucault, 1980), the focus does not lie on the truth or fallibility of such systems. Scrutinized instead are the nuances of human affairs, where truth and facts are constructed in several ways and the multiplicity of meanings is "embedded in competing discourses" (Denzin, 1994:85). Consider the following quote of Geertz (1973:5) regarding social action as a profound reading of culture:

> *"Believing… that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be these webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore… an interpretative one in search of meaning."*

The meaning being excavated in the context of this work is the outlining of the figure of the migrant-Other – and consequently, the construction of the Self through interaction with the Other. As such, the (collective) Self requires the event of the encounter with the Other. Therefore, "*if the subject comes into existence as an entity only through encounters with others, then the subject's existence cannot be separated from the others who are encountered*" (Ahmed, 2004:7). The workings of identity formation are constantly ongoing, likened to a movement of 'sliding across' between subjects in their symbolic and literal encounters.

2.3 Research Design

This section will provide a detailed plan of the data collection procedures, the analytical process, and a substantial justification of the choices taken. To begin with, this work abides by an exclusively qualitative research paradigm, aiming to "engage in research that probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features" (Johnson, 1995:4). Recent decades have seen the firm establishment of the qualitative tradition in criminology as the positivist tradition drew heavy criticism from interactionists exerting the plurality of the norms and values that are attached to what is perceived as 'normal' or 'deviant' (Noaks & Wincup, 2004:7). Qualitative research thus "*seeks depth rather than breadth*" (Ambert *et al*., 1995:880) and traverses the multifaceted landscape of meaning-making processes rather than remaining fixed upon arbitrary verification.

2.3.1. Data collection methods

The methodological process undertaken throughout this work was dynamic and shifting, parallel to the changing scenery of the research context, and was further characterized by persistent efforts to improve researcher positionality to maximize access to valuable data. The roles that each of the data collection methods played were ones of ongoing negotiation; the frequency with which a researcher employs various methods and the eventual use of the data collected via these methods is not directly proportional. The following discussion will address these issues whilst foregrounding the criterion of reflexivity.

2.3.1.1. Access, interviewing and analysis: Navigating an 'overflowing' field

In the period between spring 2017 and winter 2019, 45 semi-structured open interviews (both formal and informal) were conducted with actors situated in varying 'vantage points' of the refugee crisis in Greece and its subsequent (mis)management. The respondents varied from NGO practitioners (lawyers/social workers), asylum service officials, journalists, and politicians/local municipality representatives (or individuals affiliated with a political party), to volunteers, activists (in the field of racism and discrimination) or academics.[10] The diversity of respondents interviewed was dictated by the principal aim of the research - to draw connections between the refugee crisis and its consequences on the configurations of anti-immigrant sentiment in Greece.

Addressing these pertinent observations, two trips to Greece (one to Athens and one to Lesvos) were made during the first months of the research, to establish a network of experts and gain primary access to the field. It became immediately evident that a level of caution and a strategy of patience ought to be exercised given that, against the backdrop of the ongoing 'crisis', the 'field' was already overflowing with academics in pursuit of the same goal - physical and social access to refugee camps and state agencies, and interviews with executives from the Ministry of Migration and associated NGO's. It is important to note the differentiation between physical and social access, in that the former cannot guarantee the latter and the latter demands the building of rapport and trust with potential respondents (Noaks & Wincup, 2004: 63), and that the passing from the first to the second is most often aided by 'gatekeepers', those individuals that "have the power to grant or withhold access to people or situations for the purpose of research" (Burgess, 1984: 48). Such individuals can open some 'reluctant' doors and resolve fieldwork impasses on occasion, and during the research process of this work, especially when

[10] See Appendix 1 for the list of the interviewees and their professional capacity, the interviews, and their duration, along with the code for each respondent.

establishing contact with politicians or organisations' executives, I was surprised by how simplified the process became upon the mediation of a gatekeeper. However, I was also cautious, sometimes even refraining from using the term 'gatekeeper', given that I saw some acquaintances or respondents on the field frowning upon the use of the term or resenting themselves being labelled as such.

But sometimes even gatekeepers failed to circumvent the ethnographic obstacles brought about by the refugee research 'mania' of the years following the 2015 migration flows. After the first months of the 'crisis' access to individuals that held official positions either in state agencies or popular NGOs became a challenging task (Rozakou, 2019; Siegel, 2019). By the spring of 2018 several potential respondents kindly deflected contact by diverting to the spokesperson of the respective organisation, or by directly discouraging the pursuit of an interview because of the bureaucratic 'headache' that the process would entail. Moreover, several international organizations and NGOs asked for mid-level practitioners to sign non-disclosure agreements in their employment contracts, inhibiting any kind of meaningful discussion or data disclosure. Accessing this target sample during the research process was particularly challenging despite the aim not being to uncover or excavate incriminating details of administrative inefficiency in refugee camps or hotspots, but to instead investigate the framing of the migration flows and the reconceptualization of the nativist sentiment after 2015. Fortunately, the political and practical urgency of the crisis also resulted in frequent alternations in relevant job positions, creating a new population of 'former employees' who were no longer bound by contractual engagements and more eager to talk.

Amidst this social scenery, the strategy was to ensure the establishment of a good enough rapport with the respondents that would allow further access to their personal network and acquaintances. A non-probability snowball sampling strategy was thus employed, a valuable method for engaging with social groups under study that might be relatively "hard-to-reach" (Davies *et al*., 2011:355). Whilst there are crucial considerations regarding typicality, representativeness, and bias in chain sampling strategies (Davies *et al.*, 2011), it can be argued that the group of individuals immersed in the migration field in Greece is a 'finite' one. Though the number of NGO workers and volunteers effectively spiked after 2015, the core of migration 'experts' (in their respective field) gravitated around a set of 'familiar' faces that that were repeatedly encountered in the anti-racist festival of Athens every summer, in book presentations about the refugee 'crisis', in panel discussions around the challenges of

migration, and in documentary viewings broadcasted in solidarian spaces in Exarhia.[11] Journalists, academics, local authority representatives, migrant community representatives, politicians, lawyers and anti-racist organisations' members with long experience in the history and realities of migratory flows – this was the target research population, and snowball sampling was the most appropriate *modus operandi* given the circumstances.

Upon accessing the participants, the interview process itself warranted a degree of adaptability, informed by the constructionist epistemological approach and abstaining from notions of extracting, persuading, luring, or eliciting information from respondents (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). Knowledge was constructed within the process of access and interaction, rather than considered as an object to be excavated (Nader, 1972). An overly controlled interview carries the risk of predetermining the subject as well as imposing the researcher's interpretations of the respondent's reality, risking a disregard of the respondent's invested meaning (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000). To counter this, an approach of flexibility and reflexivity in relation to the indicative, broad topic list was adopted during this work's interview processes - to cater naturally to the expertise and field experience of the respondents: Lawyers and NGO workers held valuable information regarding the particularities and shortcomings of the migration policy framework, so discussions would be nurtured towards the most important shortcomings of the European and national policy framework, the emerging issues in the efforts to enforce migration policies, and the consequences of inefficient policies in the development of discourses towards migration management. Respectively, politicians and other institutional actors from various levels of government held a wealth of information about how the refugee crisis was shaping (and was shaped as) a relation between the Greek citizen, the State and the Other - while their experience often extended to how the refugee 'crisis' situation was different or similar to the migration movements of past years. Migrants or migrant community representatives (mainly from the Afghan and Pakistani communities) offered further information on the lived experience of being the Other before and after the crisis, and journalists offered a metaphorical 'diary' of events that had unfolded during the early and later days of the 'crisis'.

The diversification between these different target groups warranted slightly different approaches depending on the capacity of each respondent, the potential power differential between respondent and researcher, and the initial rapport established before the interview took

[11] A neighbourhood in downtown Athens with a strong anarchist, solidarian background.

place. For politicians, NGO executives and public servants, the strategy was to adhere to the provisional topic list drafted. This choice was dictated by the formal and regulated texture of the interview itself: these individuals had little time allotted for an interview and slightly rigid expectations of the content of the interview topics and questions. In these interviews, the expectations of formality and punctuality translated to significance of body language and positioning, as well as the use of proper terminology. It was pivotal to strike a balance between demonstrating command of the topic but also allowing the respondents to explain and present even the simplest issues and events as they chose, and effectively utilize probing techniques. Most of these respondents made it clear from the beginning that they had less than hour to answer my questions (see also Rozakou, 2019: 79, for the uncomfortable sense of being a burden and a disruption to the work of NGO workers or state/administrative officials). In many cases however the interview would last longer – usually indicating the development of good rapport. On the other hand, interviews with journalists, activists or migrants tended to resemble a more open version of interviewing, with a higher degree of flexibility present on both sides. In these latter cases, the aim was to allow the significant experience of the respondents to dictate the thematic foci of the discussion, allowing them to identify what they felt to be the most important aspects of the construction of the 'Other', and to organize their experience and memory in the form of narratives, stories and myths (Bruner, 1991: 4). These interviews were usually longer or completed over multiple sessions, and not often voice recorded as their *raison d'etre* was to imbue my understandings with new perspectives and light new analytical pathways which had potentially escaped me.

Irrespective of structure, it was important to abstain from a highly refined interview technique that would streamline and sanitize the experience for both sides (Holstein & Gubrium, 2016). Interviewing is a collaborative practice, and an interaction free from all the factors that could be considered as 'contaminating' the pristine neutrality of the interaction is unavoidable, even undesirable. As such, bias is only problematic if the participants of the interview are perceived purely as information-producing commodities. In a similar vein, I remain aware that 'being a good listener' is not the limit of attention a social researcher should pay to how positionality affects the production of data from a qualitative interview (Miller & Glassner, 2016). Stories shared are shaped not only by the rapport established but also by social similarities and distances between interviewer and interviewee. Again, instead of invoking the danger of bias, a reflexive account of the researcher's positioning is of benefit and urgency, and throughout the fieldwork process the researchers role and positionality as a critical criminologist was

clarified in the early stages of any contact with a potential respondent. The connotations of these characterizations – the 'critical' and the 'criminologist' – would inevitably frame the researcher's profile in the eyes of respondents, especially those with an academic background.

Finally, regarding the analysis and coding of interviews, the transcription process was viewed as an opportunity to enhance familiarity with the data collected and an initial platform for reflection on analytical themes (Noaks & Wincup, 2004: 129). Upon transcription of the recorded interviews in Word, the coding process entailed an initial process of manually highlighting excerpts that were broadly pertinent to the research sub-questions. Upon that first step, focus was placed on the narratives and the major and minor stories described in each excerpt, to identify the primary and secondary patterns emerging around organized categories of thematic interest. For example, under the category 'Inefficient migration policies', a primary patterns identified was the 'EU-Turkey Declaration'. Secondary patterns, under 'EU-Turkey Declaration' included 'Legal basis of Declaration', 'Enforcement' or 'Appeals Committees'. Alternatively, under the primary pattern of 'Narratives of cultural incompatibility', secondary patterns included 'criminality', 'religion' or 'language'. As evident by the structure of the thesis, the primary and secondary patterns were used as guiding posts in creating a backbone of the analysis chapters. Throughout this process, the interviews were approached as sites of theoretical production and the transcripts were analysed as theoretical texts, rather than as strictly limited sources of empirical data (Carastathis, 2019).

2.3.1.2. Ethical issues

When interviewing participants, the most common ethical considerations revolve around the imperatives of informed consent and the principles of anonymity and confidentiality. The modalities of research in the overflowing field of migration and the refugee 'crisis', as explored above, demand an attentive protection of the rights and identities of individuals who took part in the research.

As regards the issue of informed consent, the researcher responsibility lies with ascertaining that the respondents had complete understanding of what the research is about, and what are the implications of their involvement in it (Noaks & Wincup, 2004: 45). Under this "*assumption of voluntary participation*" (Shaw, 2003:15), the risk of a wholly transparent approach is a potential defensiveness or unwillingness of informants to reveal certain information. For a 'criminologist' who studies nativism and racism, this is a particularly interesting predicament since the connotations of the title and the expectations projected

sometimes hindered approaches to respondents. Following supervisory guidance however, it was ascertained how to readily describe the research in 'one sentence, one paragraph or one page' and, subsequently, how to introduce the focus of the research rather than the details of the researcher's academic background. Regarding issues of privacy, the research followed the ethically based policy of non-disclosure, and each interview consistently began by assuring participants of the confidentiality of the process. On several occasions these assurances were repeated when the congenial relationship and strong rapport with respondents led to the disclosure of 'off-the-record' information. To maintain the anonymity of respondents, the traditional technique of assigning a code to each respondent was employed. Whilst some respondents (especially those active in the activist/human rights scene) were not interested in remaining anonymous, many other informants explicitly asked to remain so. Based on the character of the research, the point of significance is not their identity but rather their role within the Greek context. Thus, the respondents were categorised based on their occupation and/or role in the 'field' (Appendix 1).

Regarding researcher positionality and ethical considerations, the decision was made early in the research to not seek respondents from refugees' and asylum seekers' populations. This decision was informed by the aims and objectives of the research itself (that revolve around the construction of narratives about the migrant-Other) and therefore the focus lay on the legitimizing forces and ramifications of the narratives of othering in the Greek political and public discourse. During the early stages of the refugee 'crisis', much research was justifiably focused and directed towards the personal stories and trajectories of the asylum seekers reaching national and European borders. But the phenomenon of migration has numerous aspects, of which the stories of refugees is only one. This research thus looks to delve into another: the reaction of the host society to the human on the move and the imagined figure of the migrant Other that is produced by this encounter. This does not mean that the accounts and 'voices' of migrants themselves are absent. To the contrary, a number of migrant activists with long presence on the field were interviewed. However, especially as the fieldwork was progressing, a conscious decision was made to abstain from accessing newly arrived asylum seekers or refugees. This methodological choice has both practical and ethical aspects. On the one hand, what was made gradually evident was that at the 'height' of refugee 'crisis' research, occurring between 2015 and 2017, gaining stable access at hotspots and refugee camps (either in the islands or in mainland locations) was quite challenging - unless one had a previously built network in the field or was affiliated with the NGOs or organizations which had consistent

presence in the camps. It would indeed have then been possible to find respondents in other sites of the field – in occupied spaces of the urban centers, or in neighborhoods frequented by refugees, or in the villages close to the islands' reception centers. However, one of the most pivotal experiences during fieldwork revolves around an incident that solidified the choice to conduct interviews with various actors in the field other than the refugees themselves.

Part of the fieldwork process involved taking part in a workshop about migration that was held in Athens, with one of the activities of this workshop being to conduct an 'instant ethnography' over the course of a week. Riding the tube with a fellow (Arabic speaking) workshop participant, a considerable number of passengers nearby were migrants engaged in lively discussion. The workshop participant was able to discern that the migrants were discussing a message one of them had received in social media from a researcher, whereby the researcher had asked whether they could meet for an interview. The migrants were annoyed by the requests, complaining about "all the fucking researchers" who kept coming to them with the same questions. The influx of national and international researchers in the Greek islands and cities after 2015 inevitably led some asylum seekers and refugees to feel like subjects (or even objects) of research rather than mobile individuals going through life – despite their precarious predicament. The incident was an opportunity to reflect on how a migration researcher can react to or interpret the (un)willingness of the humans on the move to be part of the research endeavor. A 'refusal' to participate in research is constructed as a manifestation of political agency that highlights the potentialities of non-action. This unwillingness or refusal can be seen as an active disengagement from dynamics of inequality and an invitation to shift the gaze towards the power structures that have actually produced the migrant as the suffering subject and the targeted scapegoat of current times (Simpson, 2007; Shange, 2019; Spathopoulou & Meier, 2020). Whilst it cannot be argued that every refugee or asylum seeker shares the same sentiment, this 'snapshot' of the field is illustrative of both the challenge for the ethical considerations for this study and as a catalyst for the subsequent methodological choices made. It is this shift in focus towards the power structures that legitimize the biopolitical governance of the migrant-Other, in combination with the narratives employed to amplify the literal and symbolic distance between the host society and the migrants, that ultimately characterized this work's objective (and, consequently, informed the researcher's positionality).

2.3.1.3. Ethnography in virtual spaces

The terminology around ethnography in virtual spaces (specifically in social media) demonstrates a noteworthy, albeit slightly confounding, variety. Researchers have employed the terms 'digital ethnography' (Murthy, 2008, 2013; Underberg & Zorn, 2013), 'virtual ethnography' (Hine, 2000; 2008), 'netnography' (Kozinets, 2010), 'discourse centered online ethnography (Androutsopoulos, 2008), and multi-sited ethnography in virtual communities (Kompatsiaris & Mylonas, 2015) to name a few. The term 'social media ethnography' (Postill & Pink, 2012) is however most appropriately suited to the scope and character of this work.

A definition of 'field research' as "the systematic study, primarily through long-term, face-to-face interactions and observations, of everyday life" (Bailey, 2007:2) would render virtual ethnography effectively invisible. However, the 'everyday life' for much of the western world has been becoming a technologically mediated reality (Hine, 2000). The boundaries between our online and offline self are blurred, such that the limit between the 'streets' and the Web is malleable. The sociological field must therefore be unimpeded from "*traditional physical configurations*" (Murthy, 2008:849). Contemplating on this exact blurring of boundaries of place and space, Postill and Pink (2012:125) postulate a preference to the notion of 'internet-*related'* ethnography compared to that of 'internet ethnography' - given that social media practices cannot be defined as phenomena that take place exclusively online. As such, social media ethnography purports to find new routes to ethnographic knowledge - flexibly adapting new methods and technologies to new situations whilst maintaining a reflexive awareness of the limits and the strengths of the knowledge produced (Pink, 2009). This methodological novelty "neither replaces long-term immersion in a society or culture, nor aims to produce 'classic' ethnographic knowledge; rather, it creates deep, contextual and contingent understandings" (Pink, 2009).

2.3.1.4. Particularities of Social Media Ethnography: access & role in a reconceptualized 'field'

For every ethnographer of the 21st century, social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter represent a goldmine of information and a methodological double-edged sword, with caveats and challenges present in every step of the research process. It can be argued that social media stretches the concept of ethnography and demands dutiful

reconsideration of the debates around the notions of interaction, community, participation (both in theoretical and practical levels), as well as the issues of access and role in the research field.

It is pertinent to consider what an ethnographer actually gets access *to* when logging in a social media platform. Arguably, SNS are a helpful means for observing individual and group behaviour, for gaining access into subcultures and marginal societal groups and even interacting with them (Murthy, 2013, Markham & Stavrova, 2016). Through social media, I managed to gain access to a constant wave of information; from shipwrecks off the coast of Lesvos and migrant protests in the hotspots, to European Commission Directives, legal developments on national migration policy and controversial interviews of populist politicians in free press/online newspapers. Every key moment and significant event become digital content within minutes of their occurrence. This wave of information is both recurrent and unstable, frustrating in its perpetuity and valuable in its diversity; most often coming in highly subjective or unreliable frames. The novelty of sites such as Facebook or Twitter, serving also as the explanation for the gargantuan size of ethnographic material, is that – unlike their technological predecessors – they prompt their users (or even 'demand' them) to update each other on news, and to 'share' photos, videos, or relevant items (Postill & Pink, 2012). Already there is fertile ground for thought as to the manifold ways in which social media ethnography departs from previously held 'myths' of sociological and anthropological inquiry. What can be problematized is how this wealth of public information on social media transforms the role of the ethnographer: the goal is not (only) to discover or unveil highly sensitive or lesser-known information but to achieve a critically engaged organization and filtering of this massive flow of data.

Before moving further, the notions of (sub)culture and community must be conceptually placed and substantiated in the context of the Web 2.0. A point of demarcation should be to ponder whether or not the 'messy' social reality (Law, 2004) and 'messy' ethnographic processes (O'Reilly, 2005) can be transferred to the social media context. In an influential work on 'netnography', Kozinets (2010:15) argues that the concepts of community and culture – both paramount to the methodology under discussion – can be traced online. Online communities cannot be relegated to being simply 'virtual' spaces, given that "the term community appears appropriate if it is used in its most fundamental sense to refer to a group of people who share social interaction, social ties, and a common interactional format, location or 'space' – albeit,

in this case, a computer-mediated or virtual 'cyberspace'".[12] However, Postill and Pink (2012) still remark that social media ethnographic practice constitutes a shift from the analysis of online communities to that of digital sociality's.

These methodological nuances should inform important considerations regarding the role of a social media ethnographer in the field. In several stages of the research, it was essential to reflect on the researcher's online presence and activity consistent and congruent with the possibilities of ethnographic exploration of Facebook. The virtual field of Facebook proved crucial and useful in several ways throughout the fieldwork process. On the one hand, it was the main platform for tracing analysing the narratives of nativism, racism, and othering as articulated in the posts and comments of several Facebook groups and pages as a virtual ethnographic field. Furthermore, it offered opportunities for establishing and expanding the network of individuals occupying important roles in the Greek context of the refugee crisis such as local authorities' representatives, advocacy officers, journalists, and volunteers. As Murthy (2008: 845) suggests, social media can be understood as "*'virtual 'gatekeepers' with chains of 'friends' who are potential research respondents*". This networking process relates both to individuals with whom I first had contact offline and those with whom I had initiated contact online. Despite not all of the individuals becoming my respondents, most of them are very vocal and active Facebook users. Via their posts, statuses, and commentaries on the events of the refugee 'crisis', connection was maintained and allowed for updates on notable developments that might have escaped attention during the three-year of data collection. It was important to remain wary of the ways in which different actors perceived developments as positive, negative, genuine, or suspicious, and to seldom use personal networks to corroborate an item of news as potentially fake. My strategy was to be systematically observant, continuously monitoring selected platforms and honing in on relevant data – living, as a result, part of my everyday life online (Androutsopoulos, 2008; Khosravinik & Sarkhoh 2017).

It was further pertinent to remain reflexive and engaged in the ever-so-frequent exchange of comments. Very often 'fieldnotes' were taken when a post or a comment sparked an idea or avenue regarding the wider context of analysis, or a reflective moment regarding the particularities, sensitivities or risks of the researcher role. The virtual ethnographic place is

[12] For a further debate on 'community' in the anthropological literature and the challenges it poses for online and/or activist practices see Pink (2008), Postill (2011), and Postill and Pink (2012).

"inextricable from both the materiality of being online and the offline encounters that are intertwined in its narratives" (Postill & Pink, 2012:127).

The enmeshment of virtual experience and the material world strongly resonates with the journey of traversing the social media platform as the ethnographic place of the field-site, which is sensorily embodied as opposed to being a mere online experience.

Another salient point of the methodological approach alludes to the diversification of the researcher's strategy and role as an (online) ethnographer, depending on the specificities of the situation. As mentioned, Facebook was a tool for networking and interacting with respondents and other individuals that remained active in the societal/political debates on migration. It was important to ascertain that this network would not only be established but consistently expanding. My rationale was dictated by the strategic choice to ensure that for every relevant development a wide enough 'net' was cast that would effectively grasp the mixed reactions of the online 'communities' being engaged. These communities included the community of respondents and acquaintances from the field but also wider online communities. In interacting with the former, a dual position of both observer and participant was maintained, whilst in the latter the decision was made to remain strictly observant. This diversification was decided upon early in the research process and was informed by reasons of methodological and analytical significance. The former 'community' was comprised primarily by pro-migrant, pro-solidarity individuals (volunteers, social workers, human rights activists, artists etc.) – that can be termed as a particular solidarian, anti-racist 'bubble' of digital sociality's, and an oscillation between observer and participant roles was considered to be preferable here. Namely, maintaining complete 'Facebook silence' for the duration of the fieldwork would effectively place the researcher outside the online community of respondents and hinder, if not nullify experiences of digital sociality.

A more crucial objective was to move outside this immediate 'community' and explore the (reactions to) socio-political developments of the migrant crisis amongst audiences that could be considered prone to various levels of anger, fear and hostility towards migrants. To that end, Facebook here remained a source for identifying the most popular anti-migrant narratives in the comment sections of posts in popular groups and/or pages. A number of Facebook groups were identified and 'followed'. In an effort to acquire a wide range of perspectives, I decided to follow pages that represented multiple points of the political spectrum. Namely, I followed the most popular (free press) newspapers in Greece (Athens Voice, Lifo), two left/ left-leaning

newspapers groups (Efimerida ton suntakton, Avgi), two right/right-leaning/populist newspapers groups (protothema.gr, Kathimerini), two explicitly nationalist (news) groups (Αγαπώ την Ελλάδα, Ξύπνα Ελλάδα) and two local news pages (stonisi.gr, lesvosnews.net). Each of these pages have a considerable number of 'likes' from Facebook users – ranging from 100.000 to 700.000, effectively signifying them as some of the most popular pages (certainly in the category of News Pages) in the Greek social media scenery. Moreover, I followed existing groups that were dedicated in creating a repository of events relevant for my research – for example the group 'Ρατσιστική βία' (Racist Violence) that was regularly updated with reports about racist or racism-motivated attacked towards migrants or humanitarian workers. From the aforementioned pages, a total of about 200 posts were selected and saved under nine categories –including 'migration policy developments', '(cultural) racism", 'internal others'. Based on the news reported and the different perspectives in the framing of the news from these outlets, I constructed a timeline of significant events and moments (such as controversial statements by politicians, migration policy initiatives, new legislation etc.) that played an important role in the developments of narratives about the migrant-Other. This timeline, as it was continuously evolving, was utilized to inform and enrich the topic list of the interviews with the respondents. More importantly, the texture and tone of the reporting, as well as the discussions initiated in the comments section informed the structure and continuity of the analysis itself by dictating patterns, especially regarding the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6.

Facebook was chosen as the most suitable virtual field for a number of reasons. Firstly due to its popularity and its text-based character which allowed me to explore the manifold articulations of nativist and racist utterances from a multitude of perspectives. Also, all the media outlets mentioned above have their own Facebook page, allowing for easy access to the news reports. Moreover, especially in the case of free press newspapers, Athens Voice and Lifo have a frequently updating newsroom. 'Following' pages instead of 'liking' allowed for a tracking of their updates without being 'visibly' associated with those pages - an outcome that could potentially raise ethical and methodological problems given the explicitly racist profile of some of them. This diverse list of outlets granted me with a much-sought balance in grasping the (traditional and new) media narrative tendencies together with the interactive reactions of Greek people. Namely, the 'Search Page' function was used in most of the Facebook pages using specific key words (this valuable function was also one of the reasons that Facebook was chosen). This choice ensured that that relevant news items would not be missed, along with the associated debates they generated. A set of keywords was used, whereby a certain degree of

creativity proved fruitful. Beyond searching for 'refugee', 'immigrants' and/or 'crisis', familiarity with the Greek online debate and its discursive modalities allowed for attempted combinations such as 'immigrant flood', 'immigrant crime', 'refugee benefits', 'Muslim migration' – knowing that notions of religion and deviant behaviour in updates shared would act as triggers for xenophobic utterances. The search function also facilitated the sampling process. Namely, I employed a version of snowball sampling by trying to identify how different media outlets have framed and reported the same event. KhosraviNik and Zia (2014:759) similarly worked under the assumption that in a highly politicized society, politics – of identity, minority, or opposition – would automatically poor themselves into SNS. In the exploration of racist and nativist narratives in larger Facebook groups or pages, the role of pure covert observer was maintained. It is not rare for an online ethnographic researcher to remain covert, making his presence in the virtual field physically 'invisible' (Murthy, 2008; 2013).

Such invisibility allows for a rigorous observation of the social interactions of page members and facilitates the 'gleaning' of a previously unavailable type of ethnographic data (Murthy, 2008: 845). Its frequent occurrence, however, does not denote a lack of controversy on the issue. For Kozinets (2002:65) digital ethnography's "*uniquely unobtrusive nature… is the source of much of its attractiveness and its contentiousness*".

2.3.1.5. Archiving and the struggle of exiting the virtual field

The evolution and refinement of technological tools and platforms have, arguably, influenced the processes of archiving the data collected from the virtual field. Beyond cloud platforms or bookmarking sites (for example Dropbox or interactive Google Docs), social media sites have themselves have become the means and the site of archiving (Postill & Pink, 2012).

Throughout the research process, the Facebook function of 'saving' (tag) a post under a variety of 'collections' (labels or categories that reflect the respective content) was utilised, in line with the progressive identification of core or peripheral themes around which the data gravitated. The content tagged corresponds in its various forms with the diversity of the of the virtual platform itself; it included newspaper/magazine articles uploaded via hyperlink, news items and blog-spot opinion pieces, links to YouTube videos or Twitter threads, and Facebook statuses shared (both pro- and anti-migrant) containing opinions or comments on policy/legal developments that were treated as ethnographic evidence and organized in fieldnotes. Many of

the posts were simultaneously categorized under more than one collection, but, at the same time, several posts only corresponded with one. The process was undertaken not as a mechanical appointing of titles in groups of data but as an opportunity for interactive reflection and thought between ideas and observations and the nuanced or contradictory messages emerging from the data. Whilst remaining alert to the regularity and the formation of patterns in the events of the refugee crisis and the popular attitudes/narratives towards these events, analytical focus was cast towards the texture and understandings of the (discursive) events rather than their frequency. Upon this archiving, themes and patterns emerging from the saved posts informed and adapted the topics discussed in interviews with respondents (and vice versa).

The 'adventure' of archiving and sampling is challenged by the growing capacities of the virtual environment. Specifically, the possibility to share content from other social media or digital platforms on Facebook is exponentially broadening the analytical horizon of a researcher. Bringing together the vast knowledge inhabiting the virtual space with the ever-evolving strategies of collecting and archiving this flow, the researcher is forced to reconcile with the urgent question: when and how to exit the field? An immediate, salient observation is that the endless flow of data is one that the research cannot 'turn off'. By being concomitantly the place *of research* and *for research*, social media offers constant and unfettered participation to the communities/(sub)cultures under research while also allowing for the tracking of every development and event that happens in the locality of the research context. This posits a tricky scenario for many researchers, as disengagement from the field can be repeatedly postponed. The risk goes beyond affecting the methodological trajectory of a research, as Postill and Pink (2012:130) wisely argue "*the ease and speed with which researchers can nowadays store information… can create its own unintended problems, not least a tendency towards data accumulation at the expense of… reflection*". It is therefore not only about taking a distance from the field and the unquenchable thirst to find 'just one more' piece of illuminating material, but also about finding the required balance between assembling and tagging material on the one hand, and properly assessing and unpacking the material on the other.

Furthermore, the effort to produce valuable, relevant research translates to a difficulty to disengage from the virtual field and halt the pursuit of further illuminating information. Taking physical distance from the field is of little use when the 'field' is following you in your everyday experience of 'digital sociality's'. The continuous flow of information is not just a gordian knot that needs to be solved in the hopes of framing a viable research design and

embark on the analytical stages. It is also a constant reminder that the scenery is endlessly and unwaveringly changing. This realization pushes the researcher to continue accumulating data under the fear that, by stopping, one runs the risk of discussing findings that might no longer be salient given the new circumstances.

2.3.1.6. Content analysis

As indicated above, a variety of data was accumulated in the virtual ethnographic process: national and European legislative and policy texts, media news items, opinion pieces, (annual) reports by both Greek and international organizations and European institutions. The preceding fall under the category of secondary data, inasmuch as they are pre-existing sources collected and collated by someone else. To analyse these sources a reflexive content analysis was employed, remaining alert to the advantages (rich data pool, non-obtrusive and non-participant positioning) and the challenges (not appropriate for analysis, risk of misinterpreting the message of the text) of the method (Semmens, 2011: 69). To properly trace the elements and purposes of the messages contained this data, the content analysis was informed by Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA). DHA is a branch of Critical Discourse Analysis and is concerned with the nexuses between discourse, racism, discrimination, and the construction of identity through difference (Reisigl & Wodak 2009; Reisigl 2018; Richardson 2013; Wodak *et al.* 1999; Wodak *et al*. 2013). In other words, DHA takes interest in the varying ways that difference, uniqueness, and distinctiveness are discursively constructed (Wodak, 2001). Concretely speaking, the main analytical categories of DHA are referential/nomination strategies, predicational strategies and argumentation strategies (see Reisigl, 2018 for a delineation of the further strategies of perspectivization and). In my analysis, the combination of nomination and argumentation strategies provided fruitful results – keeping in mind that specificities of the context under study often result in a differentiation in the manner of applying DHA (KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014). Nomination strategies aim to unveil the discursive construction of actors, phenomena, events, or actions, whilst argumentation strategies purport to persuade the audience of the validity of specific truth claims and substantiate their normative rightness. In analysing a set of policy texts (see Appendix 2), I identified key words referring predominantly to actors (for example migrants) and actions (for example border-crossing/migrant journey). Upon that, I attempted to highlight how the (subtle) changes in the framing of populations on the move was used in tandem with a progression from neutral terms referring to border crossing

to more loaded terms (for example: smuggling) that evoked the imagery of rule breaking, unlawfulness and criminality.

It should be clarified, however, that the engagement with DHA was as an auxiliary perspective, especially in delineating the predication and argumentation strategies of specific articulations (in policy and legal documents or reported political announcements). It is not systematically utilized as a full-fledged methodological strategy but functions more as a guiding light in the 'Stygian' labyrinths of discursive utterances on the migrant-Other.

2.3.2. Validity, reliability, and triangulation

It has been argued that all research must have 'truth value', 'applicability' and 'neutrality' to be considered worthwhile (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). In delineating the methodological analysis, a degree of reflexivity was employed to encourage a constant back-and-forth between design and implementation, ensuring congruence amongst the formation of core research questions, the literature review, data collection strategies and eventual analysis (Morse *et al.*, 2002).

Concerning triangulation, broadly defined as "the use of different methods of research, sources of data, or types of data to address the same research question" (Jupp, 2001: 308), similarly misguided conceptualizations could lead to a false dilemma and should therefore be carefully avoided. Invoking the shifting nature of the social world and the bias stemming from the social researchers' choice of theory and method, Noaks and Wincup (2004) suggest that triangulation is crucial in overcoming the intrinsic biases that arise from the employment of a single method, a single observer or a single theory studies.[13] Such prescriptions can be viewed as indulging the positivist desire to seek an 'ultimate truth' about the social world through cross-validation (May, 2001). If triangulation is only seen as a strategy of validation, whilst disregarding the fact that every chosen method "constitutes the issue it seeks to investigate in a specific way" (Flick, 2004:179), then triangulation can be accused of 'extreme eclecticism' (Fielding & Fielding, 1986: 33). A combination of methods and theories should add breadth to the analysis, and not be consumed in the pursuit of objective truth. Denzin (1990), adheres to this standpoint by favouring a post-modern approach that gives precedence to the subjective world-view of the

[13] Triangulation is divided in four categories/types. Theoretical triangulation (approaching data with multiple perspectives in terms of the explanatory and epistemological frameworks of a study), data triangulation (collection/combination of different types of data from different sources), method/technique triangulation (collection of data by different methods), and investigator triangulation (see Davies *et al.* 2011; Denzin, 1990; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995; Jupp 2001).

research subjects and sees triangulation as a strategy towards deeper understanding, justifying and underpinning knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) as opposed to being a road to validity and objectivity of interpretation (Flick, 2004). This work's research process engendered a form of 'reflexive triangulation' that encouraged the social researcher to account for their existence and positioning in the context they examine (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). At the same time, multiple methods were employed to explore the validity of the events or developments described. For example, data from interviews was utilized to verify or counter the contents of official reports or political announcements, as well as deconstruct and examine the popular anti-immigration myths circulating in social media. The data collected was cross-checked with different sources and frequent contact was made with respondents in search of information corroboration.

Another pertinent consideration, revolving around the positionality of the researcher-as-migrant, engages with the acknowledgement of reflexivity and subjectivity of the social scientist - echoing Hayward and Young's (2004) view that a criminologist comes to their research with heavy luggage of culture and preconception. However, the exploration should delve deeper and move beyond merely accepting subjectivity – it should disentangle it. Positionality is malleable, fluid and deeply embodied, and given that this work is built on the conceptual tenets of migration (mobility) and nativism/racism (constructions of difference), the fluidity of the researcher's positionality should be scrutinized based on existing mobilities and experiences of being the 'Other'. Drawing from the work of Carastathis (2019) on self-exploration, positionality is viewed as the resultant of multiple, even contradictory, desires of the researcher. Exercising this self-exploration entails a realization of the researcher's own emigration to the European North, in the search of a financially prosperous future. Acknowledging, certainly, that the reasons for this mobility and its urgency are incomparable to the experiences of the populations that reached Greece in the past years, such exploration further entails a realization of the desire to deconstruct otherness, and to dismantle the various fears and insecurities that permeate Greek society. These desires are, inevitably, intertwined with the "*migratory geography of the body's trajectories in space, its crossings and embodiment of multiple borders, its 'circular migrations'*" (Carastathis, 2019: 3).[14] At the same time, the researcher's positioning as a mobile body influenced interactions with the respondent

[14] Here I use the term 'circular migration' to denote the repeated migration between an "origin" and a "destination" - usually ascribed to the temporary, repeated movement of a labor migrant, Carastathis (2019:3) puts the term in quotation marks as she problematizes the separation connoted in discussing 'origin' and 'home', as well as "the politics and phenomenologies of belonging and nonbelonging that they articulate".

network in Greece. As a researcher living in the Netherlands – not volunteering in the field or experiencing the hardships of living as a researcher/activist in Greece – a liminal position between 'insider' and 'outsider' was inhabited, probing a critical contemplation of the 'inside vs. outside' nexus and division. Namely, in the last five years the researcher has been both insider and outsider to the country under study, in literal and metaphorical terms. The geographical 'displacement' from the context and distance from Greek current affairs inevitably generate a distinctive understanding of otherness and othering. This constitutes a promising perspective of observing and analyzing the historical present through a fertile tension of this regressive juxtaposition of in-and-out; a perspective that can deviate from and expand beyond the dominant narratives.

2.3.3 Researching migration: the realities of saturation

The potentialities of the closeness-distance spectrum can be hampered by the realities of research saturation - one of the most pervading aspects of conducting research on migration in Greece after 2016. The scenario of saturation looms even before entering the (virtual or physical) field. As a Greek, developments and rampant debate around the 'refugee crisis' are a central topic of everyday discussion. By the time this research began in late 2016, the possibility of entering the field "*as naïve and pure as possible without being influenced by the experiences and interpretations*" of others appeared to be wishful thinking (Siegel, 2019:2). As Siegel (2019) describes, the emerging risk when an emic perspective is unattainable is that a researcher cannot help a degree of 'brainwashing' by prevailing theories that will inevitably 'dictate' relevant themes and focuses of observation. The saturation here manifests as a hinderance of originality in the interpretation of data, the identification of salient lenses of analysis as well as in the theoretical approaches chosen. Diffusing the academic debate, this saturation almost becomes a boundary and limit of intelligibility of migration and refugee research – dictating the desirability, value, and potentiality of approaches that dare to move outside 'relevant' themes.

Saturation is also present during the fieldwork process and influences the navigation of the research setting. The Greek 'scenery' pertaining to migration research is not exactly a 'closed setting' (Noaks & Wincup, 2004). It soon became, however, an overflowing one – which, in turn, morphed into a highly 'sensitive' context. Namely, this sensitivity refers to the anxiety to discover a strategy that could prevent being perceived as 'yet another researcher' amongst my respondents. Grounding oneself in this setting is a time-consuming and uncertain process and

lends itself to insecurities as to whether one can avoid an approach that may be perceived as forceful or overbearing. Individuals with long presence in the field were justifiably frustrated and suspicious with the influx of academics and researchers seeking access to camps or connections to state agencies and large NGOs. For these individuals, primarily academics with relevant research experience or well-established solidarians/human rights activists, being approached as promising 'gatekeepers' could be construed as a lack of respect or even a 'commercialization' or 'neoliberalization' of the research process, a reprehensible desire for quick research results and an objectification of the individual expected to act as 'gatekeeper'. This dynamic made clear the importance of preparation before and during the fieldwork process.

However, it is to be argued here that a positive outcome of this aspect of saturation can be found in a re-considering of the usefulness of methodologies. Interviews with experts and immersion in the field will always be valuable tools for an ethnographic researcher, whilst there is a wealth of public documents, policies and pools of data available to everyone – beyond the limitations of access.

2.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter afforded a tentative and substantial account of this works methodological trajectory and obstacles. Upon realizing the importance of strategic methodological choices in a saturated (physical and virtual) research field, the objective was to acquire deep and diverse knowledge of the context, without trying to abolish researcher subjectivities and pre-existing knowledge of the Greek current affairs but instead engaging with them. The research was ultimately informed by a variety of methodological strategies to gather and interpret data, coupled with (virtual) ethnographic processes and content analyses with semi-structured interviews – which, in turn, were not only considered as accounts of what is happening but also as subjective narratives, and as tools to achieve deeper understandings of the context under study.

Chapter 3

Theoretical conceptualizations and elaborations

This chapter will discuss the theoretical and conceptual vehicles that guide the analysis. Firstly, the concepts of 'state of exception', 'governmentality', and 'dysnomie' are introduced and explored as significant factors in the process of legitimizing targeted hostility towards migrants (section 1). The figure of the migrant-as-Other is also substantiated and complimented by a sketching of the imagined Greekness that stands as the opposite of otherness (section 2). Solidarity is then explored as a negotiation and an opportunity for a movement towards an encounter with the Other. Conversely, the concept of nativism is defined and distinguished from its adjacent concepts. Nativism is presented as the most appropriate theoretical schema to trace and describe the process of constant comparison between the native and the non-native that encourages the movement away from the Other (section 3).

3.1 The legitimization of biopolitics and dehumanization

3.1.1 State of exception and governmentality

Agamben (1995: 169) discusses the history of the state of exception "*as an essentially temporary suspension of the rule of law on the basis of a factual state of danger*", which – in the postmodern, neoliberal scenery – has been given "*a permanent spatial arrangement*" that remains nonetheless outside the normal order. As Agamben (2005:4) later observed, the state of exception "*is not a special kind of law (like the law of war); rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself, it defines law's threshold or limit concept*". Exception does not subtract itself from the rule – it is rather the suspension of the rule that allows *for* the emergence of exception (Agamben, 1995). By deciding on the imposition of such exceptional suspension, the sovereign (State) ratifies and re-affirms the smooth, 'normal' application of the law (Athanasiou, 2007). The creation of a permanent state of emergency therefore becomes one of the essential practices of contemporary states, as "this transformation of a provisional and exceptional measure into a technique of government threatens radically to alter—in fact, has already palpably altered—the structure and meaning of the traditional distinction between constitutional forms" (Agamben, 2005:2).

For Agamben, one of the fundamental characteristics of the state of exception can be found in the provisional abolition of the distinction between legislative, executive, and judicial powers that tends to become a lasting practice of government. I would also suggest that a crucial point

of the conceptualization lies in the inherently paradoxical character of exceptional measures – them being framed as resulting from periods of political crisis. Namely, exceptional measures are "juridical measures that cannot be understood in legal terms, and the state of exception appears as the legal form of what cannot have legal form." (Agamben, 2005:1). As such, if we accept the basic premise that the sovereign is *"the one to whom juridical order grants the power of proclaiming a state of exception and, therefore, of suspending the order's own validity"* (Agamben, 1995:17), then "*the sovereign stands outside the juridical order and, nevertheless, belongs to it"* (Schmitt 1922:13). The sovereign, having the legal power to suspend the validity of the law, legally places himself outside of the law (Agamben, 1995:17). Along similar lines, Athanasiou (2007) posits that impositions of the state of exception by the sovereign re-affirms the smooth implementation of the law; the exception is not placed outside the law as a pre-legal or pre-political chaotic state of lawlessness, which the law has come to put to order. Bauman (2004) has also observed how the law itself brings lawlessness into being: *"The law's bid to universality would sound hollow were it not for the law's inclusion of the exempted through its own withdrawal*" (Bauman, 2004:31). Rather, the exception is a constitutive condition of the law, and as its legal suspension, it maintains a critical and organic relationship with it precisely by virtue of exclusion from and through. In granting the exceptional status "sovereign power comes into being in an inverse relation to the suspension of law", so that in suspension sovereignty can be exercised (Butler, 2004:60). In delineating how such suspension and anomie can be contained in the juridical order, Agamben (2005:23) highlights the nature of the state of exception as "*a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other*". Consequently, the suspension of the norm does not signify its abolition and the anomic zone it introduces is not unrelated to the juridical order.

Butler (2004) has explored the terminological and analytical uncertainties and conundrums of sovereignty and exception by centralizing the component of 'governmentality': the mode of political power preoccupied with the management, maintenance, and control of bodies – in other words, the technologies of biopolitics (Foucault, 1991). Pertinent to acknowledge is how the biopolitical technologies of governmentality are not exhausted in the "calculated management of life" but extend to the "power to expose a whole population to death" (Foucault, 1978:137) – thus, subjugating life to the power of death (Mbembe, 2003). The sovereign decision over which life is protected over that which is not is fundamentally informed by racism, described by Foucault (2003) as "the precondition that makes killing acceptable"

(Foucault 2003:255). According to Butler (2004), Foucault saw governmentality as the main outlet for the vitalization of state power, especially with respect to sovereignty's loss of credibility and function.[15] However, governmentality did not come to replace sovereignty. More specifically, the emergence of governmentality *"may depend upon the devitalization of sovereignty in its traditional sense*", this traditional sense referring to sovereignty as *"a legitimating function for the state… as a unified locus for state power*" (Butler, 2004:52). Butler (2004) argues for a coexistence of the two modes of power where sovereignty (under emergency conditions of suspension of the rule of law) re-emerges and becomes re-animated in the field of governmentality. The suspension of law, understood as a tactic of governmentality, paves the way for the resurgence of sovereignty and allows for a concomitant operation of both through procedures that become irreducible to, and ungrounded in law. To engage in a slight theoretical specificity, governmentality's irreducibility to law extends and fortifies forms of sovereignty that are equally irreducible to law (Butler, 2004:55). Law is then withdrawn from the usual domain of its jurisdiction.

This domain now opens to governmentality, "*understood as an extra-legal field of policy*", and sovereignty *"understood as an extra-legal authority that may well institute and enforce law of its own making*" (Butler, 2004:61). In this framework, governmentality's operations are for the most part extra-legal, without tipping into illegality but rather 'justified' through their aim. Simultaneously, sovereignty denotes a form of power that *is "*fundamentally lawless, and whose lawlessness can be found in the way in which law itself is fabricated or suspended at the will of a designated subject" (Butler, 2004:94). Therefore, despite the antinomies that might permeate their relationship, sovereignty and governmentality (as biopolitics) represent two technologies of power that operate in tandem – with the latter resembling a grand strategy rather than a self-efficient form of power (Athanasiou, 2007:23).

[15] Foucault (1978) makes a distinction between the two concepts, marking governmentality as the pinnacle of late modernity. The shift towards the seemingly benign modalities of bio-power and biopolitics gave rise to more insidious forms of governance that operate "through policies and departments… through state and nonstate institutions and discourses that are legitimated neither by direct elections nor through established authority" (Butler, 2004:52). As Athanasiou (2007:21) stipulates, Foucault contrasts biopolitics to sovereignty. The prerogative over the death of its subjects – the symbol *par excellence* of the sovereign and his power – is gradually engulfed by the manipulation of bodies and the management of life in computational terms. What is fundamentally at stake in the biopolitical endeavor is the maintenance of the subject in life, and even more, the control and normalization of life. However, times of crisis are exactly the historical circumstance when these divisions should be thoroughly questioned, when the boundaries between the annihilation and the regulation of the body become blurred. In such times, one should reconsider sovereignty less as an isolated singularity and more as a flexible array of heterogeneous calculations and extraordinary (exceptional) events that consolidate regimes of life, security, and morality (Ong, 2006:10).

Though the preceding theoretical formulation offers the possibility for a profound analysis of the migration policy nexus, it cannot satisfactorily respond to some of the considerations it raises. Namely, how is the fusion of sovereignty and governmentality delineated in a state of exception? And how exactly is the anomie that Agamben (2005) refers to related to or infused in the rule of law? I suggest that in the re-animation of sovereignty as a tactic of biopolitics there are some missing links in the chain. As has been argued before, regardless of its erudite and provocative premises, "the assertion of a permanent state of exception since World War I… is short of both empirical substantiation and conceptual clarification" (Humphreys, 2006: 683). Indeed, just by discussing the state of exception in the European context, the notion of the sovereign power itself should be unpacked and re-formulated to reflect the associated vicissitudes of the last decades.

3.1.2 Dysnomie

It has been argued that the analysis and interpretation of law and legislative processes regarding migration have often been rendered a domain of analysis for legal experts – even though the profound enmeshment of bordering practices, legislative procedures, norms, and rights demands a conceptualization of this interplay beyond the legal one (Hess and Kasparek, 2019). Passas (1999:406) notes how "*the independence, sovereignty and autonomy of nation states are systematically undermined by external actors and supranational bodies*", as decisions that once constituted and symbolized sovereign powers now must be coordinated. Similarly, focusing on the more abstract notion of the neo-liberal machinations pervading late modern society, Bauman (2007: 2) posits that "*much of the power to act effectively that was previously available to the modern state is now moving away to the politically uncontrolled global space*". The nation state is, consequently, rendered inadequate as the basis for social analysis – exactly because the dynamics at play escape the national framework. Passas (1999) argued that the current political scenery is replete with 'criminogenic asymmetries' - meaning mismatches and inequalities in the spheres of politics, the economy and the law, with globalization further intensifying and exacerbating said asymmetries. The EU is regarded as an exemplification of legal and policy 'harmonization', as it transparently illustrates *"a process of 'pooling of sovereignty' among interdependent nation states, as powers and functions are transferred to supranational institutions*" (Passas, 1999:406). Passas (1999) places these developments under the umbrella term 'dysnomie', referring to a simultaneous existence of various inconsistent and even conflicting legal frameworks that create an ineffective patchwork of regulatory policy

(Passas, 1999:410). Contrasted to anomie, dysnomie is constituted by "*the absence of a widely accepted transnational normative framework to regulate cross-border activities*" and "*the existence of many different, inconsistent and often conflicting legal frameworks*" (Passas, 1999:410). In this precarious imbalance, Papadopoulos *et al.* (2008) have proposed the term of 'liminal institutions' to describe this on-going transformation of policies of border management from an act of interrupting flows towards a government – or I would rather posit: a governance – of porosity and mobility.[16] Butler (2004:52), albeit peripherally, also alludes to these challenges when she notes that "*governmentality gains its meaning and purpose from no single source, no unified sovereign subject*".

Transnational institutions such as the EU are assuming a growing number of responsibilities directly influencing national regulation and promoting processes of homogenization. Such efforts are of questionable success, since the guidelines and suggestions of supranational institutions are inconsistently adhered to by national governments, with their implementation or enforcement often being haphazard or symbolic. Practically, the pooling of sovereignty is premised in the Treaties of the European Union, and more specifically, in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). When it comes to the (legislative) capacity of the Union, it is stipulated that the EU can only act within the limits of the competences conferred upon it by EU countries to attain the objectives provided therein. The competences adhere to a threefold division: exclusive competences; shared competences; and supporting competences. Under article 4 of the TFEU, the shared competences notion is explained as follows: "*the EU and EU countries are able to legislate and adopt legally binding acts. EU countries exercise their own competence where the EU does not exercise, or has decided not to exercise, its own competence*" (EUR-Lex, 2021b). One of the areas in which shared competence applies is the 'area of freedom, security and justice'. This area of the TFEU includes several articles dedicated to issues regarding border checks, asylum, and immigration. The proclaimed objective is to "*frame a common policy… based on solidarity between Member States, which is fair towards third-country nationals*" (European Parliament, 2021)[17]. Beyond the basic

[16] It should be noted here that the conceptualization proposed here is adjacent to what I am discussing here but also critically different. This regime of liminal institutions encourages the production of hierarchized and heterogenized spaces with stepped zones of sovereignty: namely, spaces that cannot be governed through the inner-European principle of Schengen territoriality (Papadopoulos *et al*., 2008) whereas the Greek context is, in theory governed by said principle. The consequence is, however, common: this process transforms the margins of the European Union into centres of gravity in the governance of border-crossing.

[17] Here the "more prominent role for the Commission" is predicated as an important new feature, conferring additional power in terms of monitoring the application of relevant legislation by bringing "proceedings for failure to fulfil an obligation against Member States which do not comply with provisions concerning the AFSJ". Moreover, the nature and extend of the European Parliament's role is presented.

premises of the TFEU, the typology of EU legal acts – such as Regulations, Directives and Decisions are explicitly or potentially binding for the Member States (European Commission, 2021)[18]. At the same time, article 72 of the TFEU, under the aforementioned Area, underlines that pertinent provisions "*shall not affect the exercise of the responsibilities incumbent upon Member States with regard to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security".*

Passas (1999) underlines the inherent flaw of this framework, namely that the enforcement of relevant policies does 'stubbornly' remain in the hands of national bodies which pursue objectives and employ methods that are inconsistent with each other. It is to be argued here that the flaw is better revealed when Passas' (1999) statement is re-formulated as a rhetorical question. Namely, *does* the enforcement of relevant policies remain in the hands of national bodies?

In the dysnomic arena most likely not, as resurgences of nationalism and fundamentalism alongside insistence on exclusive legislative and territorial competencies serve to widen the asymmetries. Ultimately, in times of confusing dysnomie and polynomie, at stake is an increasing "*relativization of norms… without pangs of conscience"* (Passas, 1999:412).

I would suggest that Passas' (1999) framing of sovereignty as a consequence of uneven, contestations of State power allows for an enhanced understanding of the fluidity and dynamism of the concept. In Agamben's (2005) formulation sovereignty is a porous concept but is also presented as somewhat static. Butler's (2004) interconnection of sovereignty and governmentality on the other hand could be perceived as overly complex. In addressing these pitfalls under the lens of dysnomie the modalities of the state of exception transform into something more tangible and conceivable. In the dysnomic landscape it is more feasible to practically explore how sovereignty and governmentality are fused, and to discern a path for grounding this fusion as it is enacted and materialized in a state of exception. I argue that this constant sovereign 'tug-of-war' (as conceptualized in dysnomie) is not just another tactic of biopolitics aiming to stretch the state of exception over time. It rather functions as a guidepost that can shine light on the broader spectrum of biopolitical articulations. It is a dynamic schematization that allows us to follow the threads that penetrate and connect sovereignty and governmentality as exercised by either national or supranational bodies. It is not a

[18] Regulations "apply automatically and uniformly to all EU countries as soon as they enter into force, without needing to be transposed into national law", directives "require EU countries to achieve a certain result… countries must adopt measures to incorporate them into national law (transpose)", and decisions are binding in their entirety.

manifestation of biopolitics but a tool for re-constructing and understanding its inherent particularities.

3.1.3 Responsibility and accountability in the dysnomic field

A final, crucial point concerns issues of legitimization, accountability, and responsibility in the state of exception. The answer to these questions, or lack thereof, is pivotal in examining the foundations of the construction of the Other. Agamben (2005:24) observed how the state of exception is closely linked to the status of necessity, "so that a judgment concerning the existence of the latter resolves the question concerning the legitimacy of the former". Necessity therefore "merely releases a particular case from the literal application of the norm" (Agamben, 2005:25). Through the imposition of a state of exception the state "*extends its own domain, its own necessity, and the means by which its self-justification occurs"* (Butler 2004:55). Sovereignty functions as a governmental tactic while severing its link *to* and suspending the question *of* its legitimacy; it "*becomes the means by which claims to legitimacy function tautologically*" (Butler, 2004:97). Athanasiou (2012:79) argues that the technologies of biopolitics cultivate the conditions for the legitimation of sovereignty – imbuing it with the aura of a universal moral and political principle. But even after arguing that legitimacy is born out of the necessity of emergency, the question of accountability remains. Butler (2004:66) maintains that this degenerated version of sovereignty seeks to establish a form of political legitimacy with "*no structures of accountability built in*". Once again, the injection of dysnomie into the mix provides a critical probe to the theoretical elaboration. What happens when sovereignty is not (or cannot) be exercised by only one sovereign power? Who accounts for which decisions, and who accounts for their implementation? Who will be, after all, responsible for the potential success or failure of what happened during a state of exception? Against the dysnomic backdrop, the unsettling answer is that there are no definitive ways to pinpoint the responsible party. Accountability enters a grey area through the imbalanced processes of dysnomie. It is diffused between State and supra-state actors and bodies to the degree that it is, if not untraceable, then at least unabashedly neutralized or passed on to another – hence the lack of 'pangs of conscience' that Passas (1999) discussed. The realization that follows is that the impasses of accountability and responsibility are entrenched deeply in the foundation of the EU legal order, inevitably victimizing the weakest States and the most easily targeted individuals, and further legitimizing their assignment as threatening 'Others'. This intersection of state of exception, governmentality, and dysnomie will be employed in the

analysis chapter, that examines how the migration policy regime invites and cultivates the dehumanization of the migrant-Other.

3.2 Imagining the 'Other', imagining Greekness

A theorization that explores the figure *of* and the relationship *to* the migrant-as-Other is a fundamental prerequisite for the delineation of solidarity and nativism dynamics.

The imagination of the 'Other' is frustratingly combined with a lack of fixity that pervades the existential and spatial aspects of co-existence with him. However, a 'crystallization' of the stranger – a sedimentation of his literal and metaphorical place, position, and role - is impossible, as the stranger is the perpetual, 'potential wanderer' (Simmel, 1971). Representing the unity of liberation from a point in space and the fixation to such a point, the migrant-stranger is untied to any place, shifty and unpredictable (Bauman, 2004). As Simmel (1971:143) notes: "*The unity of nearness and remoteness involved in every human relation is organized, in the phenomenon of the stranger, in a way which may be most briefly formulated by saying that in the relationship to him, distance means that he, who is close by, is far, and strangeness means that he, who also is far, is actually near".* Whilst as an element of the group, his position "as a full-fledged member involves both being outside it and confronting it" (Simmel, 1971:144).

In her profound exploration of the encounters with strangers-as-Others, Ahmed (2000) notes how the Other is a figure painfully familiar in their very strange(r)ness – the Other is already too close. As a result, the stranger is the one we have already encountered: "*The stranger comes to be faced as a form of recognition: we recognize somebody as a stranger, rather than simply failing to recognize them*" (Ahmed, 2000:21). Echoing Simmel (1971), Ahmed (2000) proposes that Others are already considered out of place through their closeness. By this peculiar nuance of encounter, the Other is perceived as a figure of a suspicious person - exactly because he is emptied of any content and severed of any relationship to a meaningful referent. The stranger is already perceived as 'the uncommon' allowing 'the common' to take its shape.[19] The encounter described by Ahmed (2000:8) inevitably involves antagonism – as it does not transpire between subjects in an equal and harmonious relationship. Balibar (2005) formulates

[19] Here Ahmed (2000) seems to be in direct dialogue with Simmel's (1971:148) argument that "between nearness and distance, there arises a specific tension when the consciousness that only the quite general is common, stresses that which is not common".

this conflict in an even more pronounced manner; the Other is not only an adversary but the embodiment of the negation of one's "moral, aesthetic, and intellectual values" (that is, one's imagined selfhood or community), simultaneously becoming a passive 'object' of representations and classifications and an active 'subject' of threats (Balibar, 2005:30). In this bind, the Other is not a thing but an uncanny double, not only residing in the exterior but also constitutive of the interior. Balibar (2005) speaks of the process through which the imaginary figure of an alien or external 'other' becomes 'fantastic' – in the sense of becoming a threatening double and an essential enemy. In this process, the self receives its identity by the relationship established with the stranger (Hervik, 2015). Therefore, the construction of the Other signifies the construction of an alienated Self, "where indeed the Self is nothing but the Other's Other, whose identity and stability is permanently asserted and secured (in the imaginary) through the representation of an essential Other, or an essentialized Other" (Balibar, 2005: 30). In simple terms, the Self is constructed as a projected opposite – and yet a mirror – of the Other. Bauman (2004) described the migrant-Other as the 'true villain' of liquid modernity. The migrant is a villain that represents the 'human waste' of distant parts of the globe that has reached our doors and animates the least bearable fears of a society obsessed with pollution, purification, and the identification of those constituting dangerous, foreign bodies (Bauman, 2016). The stranger-as-Other becomes the target of anxieties by being the most accessible targets of popular resentment – the nearby alien. As a result, the effort to keep the migrant-Other at a distance should be perceived as an expected response to the existential uncertainty that seeks to ascertain that the migrant remains as the Other who is more Other than the Others (Benko, 1997:25).

An intriguing aspect in constructing the stranger lies exactly in the potential (un)willingness to know the 'Other'. Namely, what should be considered is the possibility that the figure of the 'Other' resides in the realm of an active and willful ignorance – especially when this ignorance is giving knowledge its structure. Active ignorance is predicated on the need *not* to know about the 'Other' – especially the racialized 'Other' (Mills, 2007). As has been argued, ignorance "*is not a motionless state. It is an active accomplishment requiring ever-vigilant understanding of what not to know*" (Gross & McGoey, 2015:5). This vigilance is maintained to perpetuate the essentializing narratives that feed the collective, imagined myths of difference from the 'other'. Such ignorance can also be framed as a form of 'stranger fetishism' that "invests the figure of the stranger with a life of its own" insofar as it cuts 'the stranger' off from the social and material relations which overdetermine its existence (Ahmed, 2000:5). It is important to note

that ignorance here should not be perceived as a complete lack of knowledge – but rather as a deliberate indifference to the modalities and particularities of the histories and trajectories of various migrant 'strangers'. The realization of those particularities would prompt the relinquishing of stereotyping and the imminent need to embrace nuance and complexity. Instead, the persistence on (partial) ignorance and fetishization functions to conceal the substantive differences between forms of displacement and encourages the gathering of said forms "in the singularity of a given name" (Ahmed, 2000:5) – the migrant, the foreigner, the 'Other'. Along similar lines, Khosravi (2020) argued that the migrant-Other is a figure not exactly invisible, but actively unseen and unheard, exposed to a conscious exclusion from the domain of recognition. The gaze towards the Other should be explored as a practice that goes beyond an innocent act of seeing but rather reveals a way of knowing- a will to 'unsee'. The migrant-Other is not seen, but read as a type, not a whole but a sum of parts, not recognized despite watched. Respectively, the notion of understanding the Other is inevitably distorted. The will to understand is seen as a project of 'getting hold of', a will to keep the Other 'standing under'. The putative demand to be understood, however, only provides a fragile ontologizing of the Other that reflects the imagination of the collective Self.

In outlining the figure of the 'Other' one should inescapably outline the imagined Self as the Other's other. By this invocation of 'imagined', I allude to Anderson's (1991:4) theorizations on nationalism and nationhood as 'cultural artefacts', that warrant careful consideration to understand "how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why… they command such profound emotional legitimacy". Anderson (1991:6) underlined the notion of imagination in the construction of nation-ness because members of even the smallest nation will never meet their fellow-members, yet in the minds of each "lives the image of their communion". The nation is imagined and embodied as space and, thus, not only defined against other spaces but also circumscribed and barricaded as a space further away from certain stranger-Other (Ahmed, 2000). Therefore, the sense of belonging is predicated on a nation being imagined as limited, as sovereign and as a community. From a historical perspective, Trubeta (2013) has discussed how 'Hellenism' became a central tenet for national ideology already in the 19th century, and how it was employed as an 'assimilatory power' whilst emerging nation-states were competing for the heritage of the collapsing Ottoman empire. Against this backdrop of uncertainty and liquidity, Hellenism could potentially sustain the "unity, continuity and superiority of contemporary Greece" and, rather than insist on racial purity, underline the constancy of a superior and

diachronic Greek race (Trubeta, 2013:160). The Greek State was therefore founded on a spurious subtext of homogeneity and differentiation from the 'Other', in a historical process that ironically involved population exchanges between Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria in the 1920s, the subsequent policy of nationalizing ethnicity and culture, and ultimately constructing 'Greekness' as the core of national unity (Karyotis, 2012:399).

Karyotis (2012) also remarks how the safeguarding of this identity has traditionally been one of the most sacred responsibilities of the Greek elites. These elements of continuity, homogeneity and superiority have traditionally been cornerstones in the construction of Greekness: "Greekness has been defined as an amalgamate of (belief in) common ancestry, cultural traditions, and religion" (Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2009:962). This multifaceted definition also allows for multiple boundaries that serve to distinguish the Greeks from the neighboring nations. Greek national identity is therefore constructed in ethno-cultural and religious term (Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2013). There is therefore a demand for "Greek national consciousness", an abstracted reference to an array of underlying and unifying characteristics pertaining to "common descent, language, religion, national traditions, and extensive knowledge of the historical events of the nation" (Triandafyllidou and Veikou, 2002:198). Christopoulos (2020) emphasizes that Greeks are people of Greek descent (regardless of where they were born) who are Christian Orthodox, the ethnic and the religious elements being crucial as they are intertwined in their use and connotations (Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2013). Namely, Greek ancestry converges upon an Orthodox religious identity. Religion thus appears as a necessary but not sufficient condition whilst Greek descent is supposed to satisfy both conditions. The lines are blurred however, since the attachment to tradition and to orthodoxy is often found at the core of a rigid conception of national identity – to the extent that it is difficult to differentiate Greek ethnicity from orthodox religiosity (Halikiopoulou, 2011). The imagined Greekness thus constitutes a referent and anchor that stands opposite the (figure of) the migrant-Other.

The conceptual delineation of the figure of the migrant Other/stranger and the Greek is a crucial prerequisite to follow the analytical lens of the movement towards and away from the migrant-Other as elucidated in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.3 Moving towards and away from the Other

In attempting to delineate the conditions and challenges of the potential encounter with the migrant-Other, I will argue a twofold theoretical approach that describes an uncertain and contingent movement either towards or away from the 'Other'. Namely, the dynamics of solidarity are explored as theoretical frames of a movement towards the Other and the aspects of nativism frames a movement away from him.

3.3.1 The adventures of solidarity

The notion of solidarity is a deeply evocative concept, predominantly connected with positive attitudes of openness, generosity, and cooperation (Federico & Lahusen, 2018). Scholarly and academic conceptualizations are somewhat harder to grasp, as anthropologists, political scientists, psychologists, and philosophers have all attempted to frame and explore its meanings. The conceptual 'muddiness' around solidarity inevitably translates to a definitional one. Arendt (1973) argues that solidarity as a principle can inspire and guide action, whilst Durkheim & Halls (1984) noted how, in contrast to mechanical solidarity, organic solidarity is based on the interdependence of individuals within a modern society – a metaphorical glue that holds societies together. Rorty (1989) on the other hand saw solidarity as a goal to be achieved through the imaginative capability to see unfamiliar people as fellow sufferers; solidarity is not to be discovered but created by an increased sensitivity to the pain of others. The various theoretical roots of solidarity do not necessarily translate in the contemporary scholarly field, where the task of a definition is accompanied with the need to distinguish solidarity from the notions of humanitarian aid or charity, as well as to properly operationalize the term to help study the ways in which it manifests in different settings. A popular, albeit rather limiting, definition frames solidarity as the preparedness to share one's own resources with others, either directly - by donating money or time in support of others, or indirectly by supporting the state to reallocate and redistribute some of the funds gathered through taxes or contributions (Stjerno, 2012).

It has been argued that solidarity has universalist orientations, but is also conditional upon relations of support being tied to certain groups or dependence on exchange relations (Federico & Lahusen, 2018). This becomes particularly crucial in times of 'crisis', when feelings of scarcity and relative deprivation lead to a prioritization of group solidarities (Grasso & Giugni, 2016). Another important observation is how solidarity is enacted at various interdependent levels of social aggregation: the micro level of individuals (interpersonal social solidarity), the

meso level of organizations (civil society) and the macro level of the state (welfare regimes) (Federico & Lahusen, 2018:). This clarification is important given that in the years leading up to 2015, and especially after the financial crisis that hit Europe in 2008, the notion of solidarity at state level was withering, if not already dead (Balibar, 2010). The eruption of the refugee 'crisis' on the one hand strengthened such impressions, with European institutions inefficiently struggling to sketch a fair and balanced reception system (Lahusen & Grasso, 2018). At the same time acts of interpersonal social solidarity were amplified and the role of civil society and social movements, as significant means of mobilizing and perpetuating solidarity took center stage (Della Porta & Caiani, 2011; Della Porta, 2018)

It is important here to juxtapose the theoretical focus on solidarity groups, actors, and social movements with a conceptualization of solidarity as a communicative structure that mediates otherness. Solidarity, as Chouliaraki (2011:364) posits, presents "*the imperative to act towards vulnerable others without the anticipation of reciprocation"* constituting *"the humanitarian claim par excellence*". Inevitably then, the moral aspect of this imperative directs acts and narratives towards the 'vulnerable others' and is conducive to constructions of the migrant as an object of judgment and imagination. Chouliaraki (2013) ponders on the spectator(ship) of suffering and presents the 'ironic spectator' as a figure that exemplifies the complacence of self-distance. The crucial element in the ironic spectator's understanding of (post)humanitarian practice and ethos is a persistent skepticism towards any claims regarding the justification of solidarity, accompanied by a will to actually "engage in solidary action on vulnerable others as part of [one's] own project of moral self-fulfillment" (Chouliaraki, 2011:370). It is a narcissistic form of engagement that sees the enactment of 'ironic solidarity' as an individualistic project that avoids politics and rewards the self (Chouliaraki, 2013:2). Consequently, relationships of solidarity are organized around a radical difference between the self and the vulnerable 'others' – so that their suffering remains, in spatial terms, perpetually outside the limits of our imagination. While such theorization downplays the potential motivations of a political solidarity (Scholz, 2008), I consider this 'ironic spectatorship of solidarity' to be useful because it foregrounds the distance *from* and imagination *of* the Other at the receiving end of solidarity.

In overcoming static or structural perspectives on solidarity, there is an urgent need to understand and operate under the assumption that solidarity is mobile, dynamic, and constantly susceptible to change; someone who was prepared to share their resources now might view solidarity in a totally different context tomorrow (Siegel, 2019). Siegel (2019) further argues

that to explain and study solidarity, one should be aware of the possibility that solidarity can be withheld or discontinued at any given moment. Solidarity is therefore best understood as a 'liquid' negotiation that differs considerably depending on political, spatial, or temporal contexts. A theoretical framing that centers on the notion of negotiation allows for a reflexive approach – an approach that allows for the precise exploration of the influential dynamics that pervade the negotiation between those on the extending and receiving ends of solidarity. Furthermore, the liquidity of negotiation allows for the crucial introduction of a third axis (besides the spatial and existential) in theorizing the movement to and imagination of the migrant-Other: the temporal axis. If solidarity is indeed conditional and potentially discontinued at any given moment, then this temporal contingency should be carefully explored. The temporal aspect manifests in various ways, often interlinked. The unresolved prolongment of the 'refugee crisis' and its realities vis-à-vis the scenarios of co-existence comes to insert a further layer of uncertainty, and intensifies the lack of fixity in ways that call for reconsideration of how 'distance' and 'imagination' become an embodied experience that stretches painfully through time. Research foregrounding temporality – and specifically the concept of 'waiting' – as an analytical lens can provide critical insight in previously overshadowed socio-cultural dynamics of contemporary migration (Hage, 2009; Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2020). An exploration of waiting reveals the shifting dynamics of bordering, belonging, state power and exclusion. Bauman (2007:47) addressed this temporality of waiting when he spoke of the permanence of transitoriness and the insertion in the life flow without the anchor of a social role that is reserved for the refugees during "liquid times". If waiting is a concept appropriate for the experience of refugees, then it should be considered equally appropriate for the experience of the host society. What then, are the ramifications of idleness, stalling and non-resolution for the relationship between the host society and the forever transient refugees? If the refugee-Other endures a lasting state of temporariness, and therefore remains 'here' for an indefinite amount of time, the uncertainty born of this transience forces the gaze of the host society to focus on those who came to stay. But this gaze might not replace ignorance with recognition (see section 2) but with suspicion and hostility. And so the encounter engendered (forced) by prolongment encourages a potential withdrawal of solidarity and fuels an impatience to allocate the newly-seen refugee-other to categories of (un)deservingness.

Meanwhile, a genealogy of the concept of 'solidarity' in the Greek context – as born and animated 'from below' - is also needed. Solidarity as a principle can be found consistently in

the framework of social movements, alongside notions of 'self-organization', 'horizontality', and 'emancipation' – aiming at the empowerment of individuals (not only migrants) and the affirmation of social bonds (Papataxiarchis, 2016b). Solidarity, and the subject who embraces solidarity (the 'solidarian') are neologisms (Rozakou, 2018). Throughout the 20th century solidarity developed political connotations, being closely linked to the anarchist and anti-authoritarian political movements of post-dictatorship Greece. By the onset of the 2000's solidarity was imbued with further meanings and the use of the term proliferated. The multiplication of solidarians signifies, for Rozakou (2018:189), a radicalization of solidarity that occurred during the years of financial austerity in Greece: "The expansion of solidarity, and solidarity with immigrants in particular, is an essential element of the political content of sociality" in the historical moment the refugee 'crisis' came to represent. The pronounced political connotations of solidarity were explicit and intentional, in contrast to adjacent notions - such as humanitarianism – where the political undertone and motivation remained distant (Rozakou, 2012). The discursive horizon of the solidarity mandate included those who "*live at the margins of Greek society and, above all, with 'noncitizens deprived of rights.*'" (Rozakou, 2012:571). The 'humanitarian boom' made less clear previous distinctions, introducing a further contiguity between solidarity and (post)humanitarianism against the backdrop of the refugee 'crisis' (Rozakou, 2017; Ticktin, 2014). In the history of suspicion towards the provision of material assistance, the act of giving has long been considered "*a threat to the formation of egalitarian relationships*" (Rozakou, 2016:186).[20] Already through this brief conceptualization it becomes clear that the history of solidarity, as a project with ideological and political ramifications, merges with the spontaneity of the welcoming culture of the 'refugee crisis' of 2015 and, crucially, the ensuing retractions of such spontaneity. Therefore, returning to Siegel's (2019) argument, it is wise to abstain from romanticizing solidarity and better to place the notion in metaphorical (or literal) quotation marks, remaining aware of its potential semantic variation "*as an emic category in multiple contexts of economic and political use*" (Papataxiarchis, 2016a:209).

Finally, in the interrelation of solidarity with the adjacent concepts, it is important to sketch how humanitarianism and hospitality potentially influence the dynamics and the negotiation of

[20] The "unintended consequences of humanitarianism" (Ticktin, 2014: 277) have been discussed widely in the anthropological tradition in the past three decades. The pertinent suspicion is twofold. First, it relates to the de-politicized nature of the humanitarian endeavor (Cantat, 2016; Rozaku, 2012) and, secondly, it problematizes the perpetuation of inequality among the proletariat and the bourgeois society that is fostered in acts of philanthropy and charity – in connection to the Marxist tradition (Theodossopoulos, 2016).

solidarity (and the outlining of the figure of a 'worthy guest') by introducing unequal relations of power between the host and the migrant. Rozakou (2012:562) has observed how hospitality was, before 2015, envisaged as a "*national virtue, a disinterested act of concern and a generous offer to illegal immigrants who are uninvited guests in Greek territory*". It has been similarly argued that hospitality is embedded in national socio-historical contexts, underlined by stereotypes about the migrant-Other that eventually limit the construction of solidarity relations between hosts and newcomers (Carpi & Senoguz, 2019; Kyriakidou, 2021). Other researchers have also explored the evolution of hospitality into 'hospitability': a contingent and contradictory system of practices that reproduces existing orders of power and exclusion while allowing for connections of solidarity that challenge (but do not interrupt) said orders of power (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017). Amidst these unequal dynamics, the hospitable host can avow their 'love' and 'compassion' towards the migrant-Others while simultaneously rendering them intolerable (Carastathis, 2015). Khosravi (2020) alludes to similar dynamics when arguing how our interactions with arriving Others revolve around a process of exclusion of those who are already included. The move towards the Other, and the Other's movement towards the host are never linear mitigations of distance to proximity. Overall, the 'gift' of extending hospitality foreshadows an inclusion of the stranger (that may not wish to be included) to the social world of the host, while this inclusion is replete with conditions over its modality, purview, and duration. It can therefore hardly be perceived as inclusion.

I argue that solidarity, as well as hospitality or humanitarianism, should be explored as movements towards the Other that balance on an open negotiation – and constantly provide the opportunity and the possibility for a novel encounter with the migrant-Other. Negotiations however, as explored in Chapter 5, are fragile and imbued with preconditions that demand careful consideration as they pre-empt and prepare when and how solidarity is raptured and exhausted.

3.4 Nativism: the division between the native and the non-native

Nativism underlines the pre-eminence of the 'Us' versus 'Them' dichotomy that is progressively manifest in several European societies, as one witnesses "an intense opposition to an internal minority that is seen as a threat to the nation on the ground of its foreignness" (Kesic & Duyvendak, 2019:445). These introductory words make apparent how any elaboration on the conceptual tenets of nativism cannot avoid the drawing of lines between concepts that find themselves in the vicinity of nativism. The following discussion will outline

the main theoretical arguments of nativism while also identifying its relationships with nationalism, populism, xenophobia, and cultural racism.

3.4.1 Definition and the importance of context

Every definition of nativism in one way or another involves the differentiation between two groups –natives and foreigners. The concept can be framed as a "*favoring of established inhabitants over newcomers that eventually leads to the marginalization of the latter*" (Hervik, 2015:796) or "*a political doctrine that holds that the interests and the will of the native-born and inhabitants of long standing should reign supreme over those of new arrivers*" (Betz, 2017:171). In his seminal work on the populist radical right, Mudde (2007:19) saw nativism as "*an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ("the nation") and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state*". A wider definition, and for that reason a definition that lends itself as most open to potential adaptations, proposes a conceptualization of nativism not as a fully-fledged ideology but as a logic and practice that seeks to establish and maintain relations of power, domination, and exploitation by drawing and re-drawing boundaries between the two groups and justifying the maintenance of privilege for the native group (Guia, 2016:13). Nativism therefore presents "*a philosophical position, sometimes translated into a movement, whose primary goal is to restrict immigration in order to maintain some deemed essential characteristics of a given political unit*" (Guia, 2016:11). These 'essential characteristics', referring to a cultural, racial, religious, or political status quo are always contingent on the time and place where nativist dichotomizations emerge (Betz, 2007; Hervik, 2015). It is argued that a tailoring of the nativist dynamics to the specific socio-political context is essentially necessary, considering that nativism is "*highly malleable, elastic, and semantically fluid… like scaffolding in which nativist agents introduce the context-specific content for each unit"* (Guia, 2016:11). As such, nativism is not necessarily aligning to a coherent set of values and beliefs, inviting diverse or even inconsistent understandings (Bozniak, 1997).

Formulating an understanding of nativism as a philosophical position allows for a grounded delineation of its constitutive components – as well highlighting the implications that these components bring (Guia, 2016). Focusing on the perception of immigration as a fundamental threat for natives dictates the restriction of immigration and of the political rights of minorities, while the persistence on the prioritization of native rights dictates the exception of non-natives from any equivalent or welfare provisions that would promote equality between the two groups.

Further, the obsession with native features in need of protection translates to a fight for the preservation of native cultural or religious values. Consequently, those who challenge or refute this single narrative of belonging by welcoming diversity and multiculturalism are perceived as traitors. Examining these tenets can provide a more lucid argumentation on the points of convergence and divergence between nativism and its adjacent concepts.

3.4.2 Nativism vis-à-vis adjacent concepts

Regarding the narrative of essential native values, it is important to note that nativism does not function as a nation-building ideology but as a mechanism that modifies already existing constructions of nationhood along the division of 'native' and 'non-native' (Guia, 2016). Nativism is always nationalist, but nationalism does not always reflect nativist dynamics – which focus on problematizing the presence and rights of internal minorities rather than the antagonistic differentiation of one nation to another (Kesic & Duyvendak, 2019). Nativism differs from nationalism in that it does not necessarily relate to countries that do not deal with immigration influxes and the cultural diversity debates that such influxes initiate, nor can it necessarily 'travel' well to other historical contexts of nation-building (Guia, 2016:3). At the same time, one should be vigilant in not conflating the problem (the threatened nationhood or position of the native) with the problematized groups considered responsible for such a threat. This conflation would reduce the nativist dynamics to immigrant minorities and impede an analysis that seeks to understand 'foreign-ness' and 'native-ness' – rather than just foreigners and natives (Betz, 2019).

It is the pre-occupation with 'native-ness' and the prioritizing demands that De Genova (2013, 2016) considers decisive in framing nativism. De Genova (2016:233) further argues that nativism "*poses a problem about 'the foreign' not necessarily because of any specific difference pertaining to the 'culture' of migrants, but rather, more fundamentally, because 'the immigrant' is simply not 'native*'". Similarly, Michaels (1995) argues that the preference for the native on the grounds of being native exemplifies a manifestation of 'identity' politics. In Michaels' (1995:67) formulation, "*one prefers one's own race not because it is superior but because it is one's own*". Nativism relies on a maxim that alleges the equal value of different cultures but also their incompatibility – thus providing the tools for the construction of a culturally defined in-group (Hervik, 2011). Elaborating on this predicament, De Genova (2016:233) posits that nativism transcends claims of superiority or inferiority and, by rejecting a hierarchical scale of comparison, favors "*a relativistic politics of 'identity' that assumes the existence of a plurality of irreducibly distinct and essentially different groups*". Each identity

is thus rendered unrelated, incomparable, incommensurable, and ultimately incompatible (Michaels, 1995:66). The production of such an identarian 'Us' (that stands privileged against the non-native 'Them') is how nativism's pluralism purports to resolve a fundamental problem of all nationalisms - namely, that "there is nothing natural or objective or intrinsically necessary about any 'nation'" (De Genova, 2016:234). Nativism therefore provides the nation-state with an imagined 'national identity' (Anderson, 1991) and frames a 'native's point of view' by which citizens authorize themselves to debate about immigration (policy), pondering on what would be best for the 'nation' (the imagined 'Us') and subsequently producing themselves as 'natives'.

In this trajectory of producing the native through a single, essentialist narrative of belonging, nativism crosses paths with populism insofar as they both attempt to set the boundaries of exclusion against those who do not belong to the imagined nation. Populism has been defined as a "*thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite*'" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017:6). Such homogeneity is thus challenged, since the 'corrupt elite' is potentially projected as not belonging to the 'people' (natives), if the elite does not espouse the native cultural values, particularly when supporting the rights of 'polluting' immigrant minorities (Guia, 2016). A wider perspective of populism – especially in the European context – that accounts for both the horizontal and vertical registers in framing the political or cultural 'elite' as both 'outside' and 'on top' is therefore preferred (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017). What should be countered however is the idea that nativism is hiding under populism. Even though the concepts overlap, insofar as the political and ideological ramification of nativism provide the grounding for anti-immigration or Eurosceptic attitudes such intersection is contingent rather than fundamental (Akkerman *et al*. 2016). Further, a concept that is relevant and useful in the manifestations of nativism (that has predominantly been explored in the study of populism) is that of welfare chauvinism. Welfare chauvinism traces: 1) the multiple ways in which right-wing political parties make use of the welfare state and welfare benefit to draw lines of distinction between the natives who (are perceived) to deserve the provisions of the State and the racialized, migrant Others who are portrayed as exploiting the system at the cost of 'rightful' citizens (Keskinen *et al*. 2016, Mudde 2007), and 2) the sharing of attitudes towards welfare benefits and the right of migrants to receive them (Reeskens & van Oorschot 2012; Van der Vaal *et al*. 2012). What should be noted is that the concept of welfare chauvinism has been used more in the context of more traditional welfare states (northern European or

Scandinavian countries). In the context of the refugee 'crisis', the benefits are not provided by the Greek State but by EU institutions - the rightful citizens and the migrants do not practically 'compete' about the welfare provisions. Therefore, welfare chauvinism provides more insight on the symbolic antagonism and the cleave between natives and non-natives.

When the notion of fundamental cultural 'threat' takes center stage, nativism becomes entangled with cultural racism. Whilst it has been posited that nativism is a mere variety of cultural racism (Hervik, 2015), I argue that nativism offers a broader framework for establishing difference - the culturally racist narrative is only a facet of that framework. Cultural racism, otherwise termed as neo-racism or differentialist racism (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991; Taguieff, 1988) gained prominence in the context of the proliferation of anti-Muslim sentiment in France during the 1980s and 1990s. It centers upon the immigration complex and employs the category of immigration as a substitute for the notion of race to substantiate a framework of "*racism without races*" (Balibar, 1991:21). As Balibar (1991:21) argues, cultural racism's "*dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences*". Like the nativist division, cultural racism does not seem to postulate the superiority of a certain group but rather underlines the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers against the backdrop of incompatible lifestyles that can potentially constitute a danger or disorder for society (Rodat, 2017). The emergence and amplification of such neo-racism shows the ingenuity with which biological naturalism finds its own replacement and evolution – even as it foregoes the insistence on hierarchy that biological racism is predicated on. Culture is now expected to function like nature, culture can lock "*individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy*" (Balibar, 1991:22), culture "*can be essentialized to such an extent that it has the same deterministic effect as the skin color*" (Fredrickson, 2011:232).

Finally, nativism is often conflated with xenophobia, which is conceptually close to cultural racism – especially in terms of fixating upon the idea of threat and cultural incompatibility and embracing the view of Islam as an alien religion that stands opposite to the notions of individual freedom and liberal democracy (Betz, 2007). Despite disputes in the articulation of a definition, xenophobia broadly refers to fear. The etymology of 'xenophobia' is revealing – deriving from the combination of the Greek words 'xenos' (foreigner) and 'phobos' (fear or panic). Notably, xenophobia refers to the "distrust, unreasonable fear, or hatred of strangers, foreigners, or anything perceived as foreign" (Yakushko, 2009:56) - and thus to anything that is perceived as different or belonging to the 'Non-I' (Taguieff, 2005). The concept has emerged as an exclusionary ideology - closely associated with sentiments of anti-immigration and

indiscriminate anti-Islamic beliefs and practices (Hervik, 2015). There is significant overlap between nativism and xenophobia, as both operate with "explicit constructions of positively represented and defended in-groups and attacks on negatively rendered out-groups", and provide substantiation to the call for a cultural self-defense (Hervik, 2015:796).

It should be clarified that xenophobia is used differently depending on the context. In everyday discourse, it is used to denote a dislike to foreigners and a general anti-immigration position, whilst in the domain of social science the outlining of xenophobia has been influenced by recent global events and developments such as terrorist attacks. In the field of social psychology, xenophobia is approached as an uncontrollable and excessive fear (phobia) of racial, cultural, or religious difference and thus studied as a (collective) anxiety disorder (Hervik, 2015; Jucquois, 2005). The potential confusion surrounding the conceptualization of xenophobia is yet another reason I prefer to utilize the analytical lens of nativism, as the distinctions between the sociological or social psychology approaches (as well the phenomenological or conceptual approaches) and xenophobia are seldom blurred (Makgopa, 2013).

Overall, the framework of nativism is preferred because of its dynamic nature; it offers the conceptual and analytical room to explore and construct the subjects it problematizes, not as fixed descriptions of categories (the 'native' and the 'foreigner') but as an interactive framework (the Greek vs. the non-Greek). It abstains from crystallizing a strict relationship but focuses instead on a continuous comparison and holistically envelops the dynamism of divisions between the 'migrant-Other' and the 'Greek'. It also manages to identify every enemy (internal or external) whose actions or words challenge the nativist narratives – covering an implicit (and thus sometimes under-explored) aspect of the othering trajectory.

The theoretical framework of nativism and cultural racism will be utilized in the analysis of the narratives employed to sketch the divisions between the natives and the internal and external Others in Chapter 6.

3.5 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, a multitude of theoretical frames and concepts were explored. Despite their variety, these elaborations should be perceived as connected by a single thread: they are all substantiations of the borders and boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. The process of legitimizing biopolitical dehumanization should be seen as theoretically (and analytically)

occurring simultaneously with the imagination of the migrant-Other and the conditions that shape the encounter between the host society and the incoming populations. Moreover, this process is not just simultaneous but also interactive. The legitimation of dehumanization informs and is informed by the relationship constructed between the host and the refugee (and their respective transformation into native and non-native). The migrant-Other is eventually produced by the amalgamation of all these factors, contingencies, and possibilities – a figure as unsteady as the trajectory that produced it. Having outlined the theories and concepts that will be employed to guide the analysis, the following chapter will engage with the inefficiency of the migration policy framework and the consequences of this inefficiency in the targeting and dehumanization of the migrant-Other.

Chapter 4

Entangled in crisis: an exceptional path in legitimizing othering

"The declarations of a common and united Europe are good, as long as things run smoothly. But when things go wrong, then it is 'every man for himself'" (R27)

4.1. Introduction

Though much has been written regarding the policy framework that produced the biopolitical border regime following the 'summer of migration' in 2015 (Carrera *et al*., 2015; De Genova 2016b, 2017; Tazzioli, 2018; Tazzioli & Garelli 2020), still unexplored are the structural dynamics that prepare and perpetuate the aforementioned border regime. Few researchers have explicitly called for a focus on the effects and repercussions of the migration movements of 2015 as regards the border regime's pillars and rationale (Hess & Kasparek 2017, 2019; Kasparek, 2016; Menendez, 2016). A critical exploration of the migration policy framework is an essential prerequisite to avoiding over-simplification and will further outline meaningful connections between the top-down actions and bottom-up reactions in the construction of the Other. The aim of this chapter is to therefore expose and substantiate the links between policy, its controversial implementation, and the subsequent mobilization of negative and hostile sentiment towards migrants.

An engagement with the policy ramifications in the Greek context must begin with the problematization of the 'crisis', how a reaction to such crisis gave rise to the 'politics of exception', laying a legitimizing foundation for policies that systematically undermine the standards of European law (Calhoun, 2004). Instead of uncritically accepting that the refugee influx legitimates a 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2005), the discussion will trace latent, sedimented realities that indicate the conditions of 'crisis' and 'exception' as being present prior to 2015 (section 2). Both the intentional and unintentional effects of the 'exceptional' migration policy will be analyzed in line with its purported rationale, aims, reception, and eventual efficiency. The conceptual 'state of exception' is the principal point of departure for the following analysis, whilst the importance of tailoring the theory in a way that corresponds to the complexities of the current 'juridical order' will be emphasized. This process of 'tailoring' involves two steps – one relatively minor and one rather major. The first minor step

revolves around the notion of 'suspension', and examining how and why the policy nexus on migration after 2015 be viewed as suspension (section 3). The second major step entails a careful reconsideration of the imbalance of Greek State sovereignty against the backdrop of the European Union's increasing influence and (legislative) capacity in matters of migration. This 'pooling of sovereignty', in which powers and functions are transferred from nation states to supra-national bodies, has contributed to a pervasive spearheading of a socio-legal environment of 'dysnomie' (Passas, 1999). This conceptualization, whilst formulated to explain the persistence of cross-border crime activities, invites the possibility for a crucial re-imagination of the state of exception, as well as a grounded approach to the ramifications of the emergency policy measures taken since 2015. A threefold distinction that touches upon the particularities of exception will be argued: exception as *comfort*, exception as a *bargaining tool* and exception as *entrapment*. Consequently, the state of exception is reflected through a generalized impasse of the policy measures, further aggravated by the chronic bureaucracy of the Greek system (section 4).

Elaborating how and why the Greek State finds itself entangled in the webs of a dysnomic state of exception is crucial for understanding the construction of the migrant-Other. A significant question is raised: who has the power to decide how the country reacts and protects its interests and borders against the perceived threats of the 'refugee crisis' and the uncertainty and insecurities it generates? The contingency that comes with answering the previous question amplifies an already alarming distrust in the Greek State and triggers hostility towards those who are held to exemplify the State's failures: the migrants.[21] This critical line of enquiry is necessary in delineating how, through migration policies, biopolitical responses are legitimized against the migrant as the permanent-Other, as a perpetual reminder of a 'challenge' (a 'crisis') that can never be 'solved'. In terms of the timeframe covered in this chapter, the events discussed fall primarily between 2015 and 2017. While the first years of any 'crisis' are expected to be more prolific in terms of policy and legal text production, most of the interviews quoted in the following sections were held between 2018 and 2019, whilst most of the

[21] Of course, hostility is simultaneously directed to those considered responsible for the country's 'fate': the Greek politicians, the EU etc. However, as I will argue both here and in the following chapters, the migrant-Other constitutes the easiest target of this hostility. As Bauman (2004: 66) suggested "*asylum seekers and 'economic migrants' are collective replicas… of the new power elite of the globalized world, widely (and with reason) suspected to be the true villain of the piece. That elite is much too powerful to be confronted and challenged pointblank… Refugees, on the other hand, are a clearly visible, and sitting, target for the surplus anguish*".

controversial policy tools were still in effect. This clarification already provides insight as to how the 'temporary' measures of exception became the canon.

4.2 A crisis before the 'crisis': the Greek case before 2015

In contextualizing what constitutes crisis or exception in the Greek realities of handling migrant influxes, it is illuminating to take notice of the fundamental shortcomings of the policy framework in effect before 2015. Whilst such reiteration is not novel, it is a relevant step towards arguing the contingency of 'crisis' and the state of the exception it foreshadows, as a state of plasticity and malleability, simultaneously conditional upon its utterance and potentially present in similar configurations before being acknowledged as such by EU, State institutions, and the media.

All legislative and policy tools are expected to adhere to the Geneva Convention, "*integrated - as a cornerstone - into every international, European and national legislation*" (R2). During the 2000s and the early 2010s, the most elemental policy tool on the management of migration flows towards Europe, was the Dublin Regulation.[22] The Dublin Regulation establishes the Member State responsible for the examination of the asylum application. Family considerations, recent possession of visa or residence permit in a Member State, and regular or irregular entry into the EU serve as criteria to settle responsibility. In effect since 1997, the regulation was amended in 2003 (Regulation No 343/2003) and 2013 (Regulation No 604/2013). The Dublin Regulation has been further complemented by several relevant Directives (see AIDA Report 2018: 10-13).[23] One of its most controversial predicaments can be found in the 2003 amendment that dictates that "*[w]here the asylum seeker has irregularly crossed the border into a Member State, that Member State will be responsible for examining the asylum application".*[24]

As an advocacy officer stipulated, the lack of fairness and sustainability inherent in the Dublin Regulation was evident from the very beginning:

> *"For those of us living and working in countries of the European South, it was clear -*

[22] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants_en
[23] Interestingly, important Directives regarding procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection and the delineation of respective standards (Directives 32/2013 and 33/2013, respectively) were only transposed in the Greek legal order after 2015, well after the 'crisis' eruption, with Law 4375/2016 and Law 4540/2018.
[24] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM:l33153&from=EN

quite before 2015 - that the Dublin Regulation was not meant to work in situations of massive migrant influx. Actually, it was never meant to work anyway. It was a system based on creating a buffer zone in southern countries, distinguishing the legal categories of migrants, refugees, sans papiers etc. This whole thing was not operational. One cannot work in the field based on those divisions. So a Common European Asylum System did not exist… The manner in which the Regulation was functioning was rather hypocritical. It was essentially a policy tool that transferred the burden in the countries of the European South. Period." (R27)

The asymmetrical allocation of responsibility soon exposed structural weaknesses and the lack of preparation on behalf of the Greek administration, as well as a lack of political willingness to treat migration as an issue that warrants a holistic, proactive political design that extends beyond moral panics, spasmodic measures, extensive policing, and inhumane detention (Kiprianos *et al*., 2003; Triantafyllidou, 2009). As many respondents stipulated, Greece had some – but not extensive - experience in receiving populations, given its history as a country of emigration (Bail, 2008). It is noteworthy that until the establishment of an Asylum Service through Law 3907/2011, the immigrant reception procedures were handled by the Police, typically, by officers who had limited knowledge on the legal framework, sensitivity, and responsibility surrounding the task.[25] By 2008, the situation had gained significant international attention and Greece was under heavy criticism over the treatment of asylum seekers reaching the borders, "with a group of 63 refugee-assisting organizations urging all EU capitals to immediately suspend transfers of applicants to the Mediterranean country"(EU Observer, 2008). During the same year the ECRE (European Council on Refugees and Exiles) issued open letters to the European Commission urgently calling for a suspension of the Dublin framework until Greece complied with EU and international law. Migrants were detained in police custody for months (as the police stations had become de facto detention centers) and experienced constant abuse through inhumane and degrading treatment. Already unsuitable detention facilities were exacerbated by the overcrowding caused by repeated increases in the legal duration of immigration detention (Cheliotis, 2013; Christopoulos, 2020).

Despite the grim realities, it was not until 2011 that the Dublin II Regulation was officially suspended following two judgements by the European Court of Human Rights and the Court

[25] Law 3907/2011 "on the establishment of an Asylum Service and a First Reception Service, transposition into Greek legislation of Directive 2008/115/EC "on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third country nationals".

of Justice of the EU, that explicitly acknowledged and admonished the country's failure to provide the expected reception conditions and minimum standards of legal protection.[26] A lawyer who maintained a crucial position in the Asylum Service during its formative stages, notes how:

> *"Every state is obliged to take in asylum seekers and tend to refugees – there is no excuse like 'we don't have the necessary infrastructure' or 'our reception conditions are abysmal' or 'our hospitality centers are worse than those of third world countries'. Instead of seriously arguing that the Regulation was creating a disproportional burden for the country and asking either for help or for the amendment of the Regulation, we were repeatedly convicted for the reception conditions and the procedure of examining asylum applications… which was convenient for us, since it gave us more time to improve the infrastructure"* (R2)

What should have been considered a disgraceful moment for a democratic State was instead experienced as a source of relief, a messy yet effective way-out of the country's responsibilities – a position that denotes considerable political immaturity (see section 4). At the same time, what should be highlighted is how the multifaceted challenge of making a flawed system work, in a country that lacked both the necessary means and experience, coincided with the peak of the Greek financial crisis. As a respondent recounts, the debate for a reformation of the Greek asylum system was initiated in 2008. However, the Appeals Committees were only established in 2010 (with Presidential Decree 114/2010) following the EU's criticism for the recognition rates and the non-individualized character of negative first instance decisions, and the Asylum Service became operational no earlier than 2013 (R45).[27] But even amidst this troubling scenery, a respondent argues that given the severity of adversities, the functioning of the Service was not lacking in quality:

> *"I think that the set-up and the function of the Asylum Service was equally good, if not better, compared to respective organizations in northern European countries… bearing in mind that we tried to build it while already deep in the financial crisis… The real*

[26] *M.S.S v Belgium and Greece* (no. 30696/09); *NS v Secretary of State for the Home Department* C- 411/10 & C-493/10, see https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/case-mss-v-belgium-and-greece-application-no-3069609_en#:~:text=issued%20the%20M.S.S.-,v.,asylum%20seeker%20back%20to%20Greece.

[27] Presidential Decree 114/2010 "on the establishment of a single procedure for granting the status of refugee or of beneficiary of subsidiary protection to aliens or to stateless persons in conformity with Council Directive 2005/85/EC on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status", available in English at http://bit.ly/1GfXCwV

> *question is why did the political leaders not plan ahead, even though there was circulating chatter that more than a million asylum seekers were amassing in the Turkish coasts?"* (R2)

Against the foreseeable influx gathering across the Greek border, migration management (on both European and national levels) remained short-sighted and grounded in a philosophy of deterrence, willfully turning away from the imminent 'crisis' waiting to happen. The lack of a proactive political design from the Greek perspective is evident here, balancing between denial, naivete and neglect – notions that become recurrent problems during the 'crisis' that followed:

> *"the policy on migration back then was to deter the migrant from arriving, to avoid registering them and handling their case… some migrants were crossing from Evros and there were also some border crossings towards the Aegean islands – which were of course not officially registered but they were reported by NGOs and international organizations. There were not official national statistical data but migrant testimonials from before 2014. The idea was to send them back if possible. If not, the authorities were supposed to apprehend migrants and order them to leave the country within 30 days – or maybe sometimes the police were detaining them for a couple of months in the islands"* (R4).

The Greek asylum system was created to provide momentary solutions, to operate under rules of urgency and emergency, precipitating its vulnerability to heightened pressures. Similarly, the European legislation is, at best, "okay, unless faced with crisis conditions" (R2). The situation before 2015, whilst not characterized by unusually high numbers of asylum seekers, was almost orchestrated to invite a crisis it could not withstand, the contingency and the circular capacity of a 'crisis' becoming a crucial point. The 'normal conditions' under which the European system was operating largely ignore the dynamism and unpredictability of migration, and any argument or fantasy about the return to 'pre-crisis' normality is devoid of meaning, exactly because the inherent flaws of the system under which normality (barely) manages to operate predetermine the (re)occurrence of 'crisis'.

4.3 Exploring suspension: Glimpses in the texture of emergency

In delineating the 'state of exception' as a reactive response to the refugee 'crisis', the prerequisite of a 'suspension of the juridical order' demands careful analysis. It should therefore be considered, if and how, the European migration policy nexus of 2015 and 2016 corresponds to Agamben's (2005) notion of 'suspension', how it expands, delimits, and paves

way for the legitimization of biopolitical tactics and actions. Specifically, the discussion here will explore the troubling notion of 'pooled' sovereignty as coined by Passas (2003) in relation to suspension. Given the EU's influence over matters of migration, it is imperative to re-imagine the suspension as a mode of governmentality that emerges from a supranational body.[28] We should attempt to trace the unsteady balance of this dysnomic process by introducing layers to the meaning of sovereignty, before and after we read the suspension of law as a "*tactic of governmentality*" (Butler, 2004:55), for such a statement needs a substantiation of the aphorism it carries. It is important to therefore analyze the process of dictating a state of exception and emergency as a 'decision' taken at the European level, slowly and variously diffusing itself throughout sovereign States.

As previously discussed, the Dublin Regulation represented a cornerstone for the handling of incoming migrant populations. Therefore, arguing that this Regulation is in one way or another suspended can begin to fulfil the prerequisite in question. As early as May 2015, the Commission in its "European Agenda on Migration" admitted how:

> "[*e]mergency measures have been necessary because the collective European policy on the matter has fallen short. While most Europeans have responded to the plight of the migrants, the reality is that across Europe, there are serious doubts about whether our migration policy is equal to the pressure of thousands of migrants…"*(European Commission, 2015:2)

Following this, the Commission underscored the need for a new set of core measures, as well as a consistent common policy that will restore confidence to the Union's ability to combine European and national efforts to address migration and meet the international and ethical obligations "in accordance with the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility". These core measures were soon outlined in the Commission's "Communication towards a reform of the Common European Asylum System and enhancing legal avenues to Europe", where five priorities were set out to combat structural shortcomings (European Commission, 2016a). In the course of "*establishing a sustainable and fair system for determining the Member State responsible*" for each asylum seekers, and "*achieving greater convergence*" in the EU asylum system (European Commission, 2015:4), the Commission proposed the triggering of an 'emergency response' system envisaged under Article 78(3) TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning

[28] As mentioned in the theoretical framework a shared competence framework – as described in art. 4 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU - applies in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. For the text of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, see: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012E%2FTXT

of the European Union) [29]. This would include a temporary distribution scheme for persons "in *clear need* of international protection" and hope to ensure a fair and balanced participation of all Member States in such coordinated efforts. In the Annex of this policy agenda brief, the Commission sketches the criteria and rules of these 'Relocation and Resettlement Schemes'. It is noteworthy that, for the Relocation Scheme, the distribution key was derived from "*objective, quantifiable and verifiable criteria that reflect the capacity of the Member States to absorb and integrate refugees*", namely population size, GDP, unemployment rate and number of spontaneous asylum applications (per one million inhabitants) for the 2010-2014 period (European Commission, 2015). Similarly, the Resettlement scheme – under the same distribution key - foresaw the transfer of 20.000 individuals across all Member States and pledged 50 million euros for the implementation of the scheme for the 2015-2016 period. An interesting contradiction can be observed here, as the emergency response introduced as a derogation to the Dublin procedure, actually reflects a more balanced and fair strategy for allocating asylum seekers across Member States. In other words, the exception is far more 'symmetrical' than the existing framework (though under-enforced in the case of Greece as previously discussed). The exception is thus presented as a manifestation of the Union's intentions for an equal and humane system, almost constituting an oxymoron; it is suggested that the attempt for fairness should be perceived as a temporary mechanism, a quite literal 'exception', from the normality of an unequal, unfair system. The Relocation Program can therefore be critically perceived as "an imperfect corrective move in an innately unfair System… doomed to become what it became… a 'sorting' mechanism for the countries of the North to identity 'desirable' asylum seekers that was framed as a solidarity move" (Papastergiou & Takou, 2019:30). The Dublin adventures, if nothing else, highlight that the inherent paradox of the state of exception goes further than posing as an increasingly recurrent technique of government, instead becoming 'the rule itself" as Benjamin (1942) ominously predicted. It is evident that neither the rule nor the exception are distinct or demarcated – they are fused with the other in an inextricable manner.

During the later months of 2015 and early 2016, the EU-Turkey deal began taking shape, as a paradigmatic suspension of the legal order and its replacement with rules without a clear connection to legitimate legislative action, paving the way for a masterful process of

[29] The legal provision invoked here, the 3rd paragraph of Art.78, forecasts that: "In the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterised by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, may adopt provisional measures for the benefit of the Member State(s) concerned. It shall act after consulting the European Parliament".

'emptying' the notion of accountability from any meaning. Being referred to as a Statement, a Deal, a Joint Declaration or a Joint Action Plan, terms conveniently neutral and free from the usually firm and strict connotations of legal vocabulary, the fundamental premise of the deal was that "*all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey*" (European Council, 2016). The action plan stated that for every Syrian being returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian would – on the same day – be resettled from Turkey to the EU. The European Council underlined its commitment to protect all migrants "*with the relevant international standards and in respect of the principle of non-refoulement*" (European Council, 2016). The incongruity of the law-exception nexus is again obvious, since the suspension of the legal order comes hand in hand with a pledging of allegiance to the same legal order. It is a typical conundrum of governmentality – understood as a set of procedures 'irreducible to' and 'not necessarily grounded on' law (Butler, 2004:55). In an illuminating report on the challenges of migratory flows in 2017, the Greek Ombudsman sternly argued that through the EU-Turkey deal Europe is moving away from its formation as a common, European political entity of solidarity by acting increasingly as an intergovernmental formation (Greek Ombudsman, 2017).

Alongside the controversial policy tools, another important issue is how suspension and exception are negotiated by the EU in the policy texts; how the vocabulary of emergency introduces and substantiates its own necessity, and how it implicitly cultivates the necessity as an ever-present shadow. It is this necessity that allows for the state of exception to appear "as an 'illegal' but perfectly 'juridical and constitutional' measure that is realized in the production of new norms (Agamben, 2005:28). Such new norms have been taking shape since late 2015, amidst the scenery of an effectively suspended Dublin Regulation and the dawn of a new asylum system. While it is not true that the policies under discussion are 'illegal', it is to be suggested that they maintain a significant degree of controversy. This controversy stems not so much from a questionable legality (or morality, for that matter) of the emergency measures, but because of the aforementioned shadow that can be perceived as a constant post-scriptum, a sign by the European institutions that they reserve the right to expand or aggravate the conditions of this state of exception if the necessity persists. To substantiate this argument the discussion can return to the policy texts mentioned previously, the 'European Agenda on Migration' and the 'Communication towards a reform of the Common European Asylum System and enhancing legal avenues to Europe'. An analysis of these texts - their structure, argumentation, choice of words and overall discursive strategy - offers critical observations of

a ‘texture’ of emergency. In the European Agenda for migration, the imperative of “saving lives at sea” is proclaimed, and Europe is envisaged as “*a safe haven for those fleeing persecution as well as an attractive destination for the talent and entrepreneurship of students, researchers and workers*” (European Commission, 2015:5). On the next page, the Commission places some constraints for entering this haven by introducing the ‘Hotspot’ approach:

> “*where the European Asylum Support Office, Frontex and Europol will work on the ground with frontline Member States to swiftly identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants*”. (European Commission, 2015:6)

Three paragraphs later, President Juncker’s guidelines are cited: “*a robust fight against irregular migration, traffickers and smugglers, and securing Europe's external borders must be paired with a strong common asylum policy as well as a new European policy on legal migration*” (European Commission, 2015:6).

From one page to the next, those fleeing persecution transform into migrants, then irregular migrants, to victims of criminal networks (thus, ontologically adjacent to ‘crime’ by association) – and finally threats to the European borders. Europe, in the face of the ‘crisis’ reverts from an attractive destination to a biopolitical mechanism of control, to an institution of deterrence. The Union’s progression is both seamless and extreme; one might wonder whether it is triggered by the ‘threat’ of certain populations or if it is the progression itself that produces the categories of (un)deservedness and (un)desirability that it seeks to violently manage. It is a process characterized by a remarkable and alarming circularity.

In the ‘Reform of the Common European Asylum System’, a similar progression can be followed. The introduction posits how:

> “[*i]f we want to improve our way of managing migration, we have to become better… at reaping the benefits of migration by ensuring effective integration and participation into the host society of all - refugees or legal migrants”*. (European Commission, 2016a:3)

The tone appears to significantly change when the reader is assured that one of the priorities is “*preventing secondary movements*” and that the functioning of the Dublin mechanism is not to be “*disrupted by abuses and asylum shopping*” (European Commission, 2016a:6). Moreover, the Commission argues for an extension of the EURODAC system “*as a means to contribute to the fight against irregular migration by allowing the system to be used to facilitate the return*

of irregular migrants". (European Commission, 2016a: 9). The invocation of notions of 'fight', 'prevent', 'abscond', and 'border protection' is far from neutral. Indicatively, various form of synonyms of 'prevention' appear 13 times in both texts, 'irregular' 42 times, 'control(s)' 8 times (always in relation to borders) and 'fight' 10 times (three of which when alluding to the 'fight against smuggling networks').

The combined articulation of emergency and suspension serves to sustaining and bolstering both concepts and is central to the vocabulary of exception. Emergency is a legitimizing factor in the vehement extent of suspension mobilised by the European policy on migration, in its paradoxical production of the very subject it wishes to control. This discursive trend can be found in several texts of European institutions that attempt to negotiate a 'way-out' of the crisis. In the Conclusions of the European Council, published in February 2016, the proclaimed objective is "*to rapidly stem the flows, protect our external borders… and safeguard the integrity of the Schengen area*" (European Council, 2016b:3). In a 'White paper on the future of Europe', migration is discussed under a section titled 'Heightened threats and concerns about security and borders', the Commission underscoring how:

> "*the chilling effect of recent terrorist attacks has shaken our societies. The increasingly blurred lines between internal and external threats are changing the way people think about personal safety and borders… the refugee crisis has led to a contentious debate about solidarity and responsibility among the Member States and fuelled a broader questioning of the future of border management and free movement within Europe"* (European Commission, 2017)

This extract epitomises the pre-emptive legitimation of the harsh emergency measures the 'threat' has necessitated. Throughout this array of texts, to the varying extent that they prepare for binding emergency measures to be adopted by Member States (thus indicating that the EU is exercising its shared competence), it is crucial to observe how the EU is making the rule in withdrawing from it. By invoking the vocabulary of emergency and interweaving migration with threats to security, the EU is precipitating its withdrawal from the rule it explicates (a fair, humane, protective system of asylum). The articulation of the rule contains its exception, in other words, the rule becomes conditioned with its own suspension. Humanity and solidarity are becoming an empty letter, a "kenomatic state, an emptiness of law" (Agamben, 2005: 6) ,as the threat of irregular migration fulfils the prerequisite of necessity. Since irregular

migration will always exist, so too will the necessity and the exception. A respondent comments on the constant back and forth:

> *"We witness a Union that somehow tries to set a number of rules that somehow adhere to the European 'acquis' and, simultaneously, we witness the Commission that deviates from its own mechanisms in order to implement a political agenda. If something became clear in 2015, that is the ultimate tergiversation of Europe*" (R27)[30]

A final manifestation of suspension to be mentioned is evident in the dizzying polynomial production of (quasi)legal/policy texts alluding to the transformations of exceptions to a rule. The changes and variations that occurred in policy related field developments between 2017 and 2018 were so wide and various that they became almost anecdotal in respondent conversations. One of the respondents would cynically remark much of the previous interactions had become obsolete as half of the legal framework discussed had changed over the year (R1). A careful examination of the comprehensive reports on migration and asylum illuminates the multiplicity and differentiation of the legal framework. For Greece, a mere overview and enumeration of the laws, presidential decrees and implementing decrees (such as (Joint Ministerial) Decisions and Police Circulars) presently in effect spans multiple pages, referring to such nebulous legal particularities as regular procedure, the prioritised examination, the Dublin procedure, the accelerated procedure, the border procedure, the admissibility procedure and the fast-track processing (AIDA, 2018). The point here is not to delve into the specificities of the legal procedure and jargon but to instead place them in the wider picture in relation to the conceptual state of exception. The message of the biopolitical tactic itself is clear: the division and categorization of migrant populations based on measures and policies of emergency, whilst initiated in 2016, are largely still in effect at the moment of writing.

This section argued that the vocabulary of emergency, as a legitimizing necessity for the suspension of the rule, is heavily present in the central EU policy initiatives outlining the 'tackling' of the refugee 'crisis' (initiatives such as the Relocation Schemes, the EU-Turkey Deal, the Reform of the CEAS etc.), with a similar discursive strategy being emphasised in the various policy texts. An analysis of the meaning behind the vocabulary of emergency reveals the blurred boundaries between the rule and its withdrawal – a predicament that legitimises the

[30] The EU's 'acquis' is the body of common rights and obligations that are binding on all EU countries. See https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/acquis.html.

fortification of a fair and humane system of asylum into a robust border management. What must be explored now are the intended and unintended consequences of these policies, the 'efficiency' or 'success' attributed to them, and the realities they have manifested within the Greek context.

4.4 Modalities of exception: the Greek case

The aim of the following section is to diligently re-construct the relationship between the state of exception, governmentality, and sovereignty in the asymmetrical field of dysnomie. As elaborated in the theoretical framework, the enmeshment of sovereignty and governmentality that manifests as a state of exception can be framed in several ways. It can be argued that governmentality stands as the evolution of sovereignty, that they exist both historically and ontologically, and that sovereignty is re-vitalized in times of governmentality. A consideration of the already turbulent reality of sovereignty struggles in the dysnomic scenery of the EU brings with it a layer of analysis that can greatly assist in exploring an abstract theorization. Zooming-in on the specific Greek context also offers an opportunity to trace the consequences of the suspension of the juridical order in practice and in the field, to explore the modalities of the state of exception and uncover what is at stake when exception is perpetuated.

4.4.1 Exception as comfort

The first step in the threefold state of exception is that of comfort. In this predicament, the state of exception is experienced as a welcome relief from further responsibility. For example, the suspension of legal order that occurred during the opening of the borders in 2015 translated to a welcome vacuum of accountability for the Greek state – given that the suspension was dictated 'from above'. At the same time, this comfort served to neutralize and conveniently mystify the systemic weaknesses of the Greek system of asylum and reception. The element of comfort – a concept invoked repeatedly by several respondents – is comprised of two, interlocking components. The first surrounds the narrative of the surprised, unprepared country, the second the belief that Greece overheld the continuation of the country's role as a transit zone. A respondent from the Asylum Service describes how:

> *"the way that the Greek State initially handled the situation was ranging from blissfully naïve to cunning. Naïve because it was all about the welcoming of struggling people in need and cunning because this benevolence was based on the knowledge that the refugees were leaving.* (R41)[31]

The naivety of comfort fluctuates between wishful thinking and conscious short-sightedness, encapsulating the positioning of the Greek state prior to the EU – Turkey joint declaration. As a lawyer succinctly wondered, "*what kind of migration policy consists of telling people: 'You can pass by'?"* (R31). The Dublin debate is again central as the system that had been suspended specifically for Greece long before being horizontally suspended in 2015 - albeit for a brief amount of time. Commenting on the paradox of contingent and permanent states of exception, one respondent ironically emphasizes the persistent reliance of the Greek State on the comfort of suspension:

> *"Greece takes comfort presenting itself as a country that no one wants to stay at… the fact that Greece is a country of first entry and reception that suddenly turned into a sending country, since it was plagued by lawlessness and chaos and violence… was something that was considered a 'win', a 'success'"* (R27).

The problematic ramifications of this outlook manifest in the role the country played during the unfolding of the refugee 'crisis', and as the initial measures of emergency turned into a more deliberate modality – a biopolitical management of the incoming populations and their undesirable mobility. The policy and legal developments that occurred after the summer of 2015 were gradually shifting towards an agenda that aimed to control, curtail and, eventually, deter migrants entering Europe. As one respondent from the Asylum Service noted in early 2019:

> *"What the Greek government failed to understand in time was that this narrative of naivety had a short life-span. At some point, much sooner than the government expected and hoped, it was clear that the borders would close – and this was a reality that our politicians just did not want to admit…This denial created big problems, the biggest of which was that it sedimented a confidence that Greece is a transit country that has no obligation other than to welcome these people and bid them farewell - a belief*

[31] The word specifically used by the respondent translates from 'cunning' to 'κουτοπόνηρος' [koutoponiros]. Important to note is that the Greek word is used to describe someone who believes they are being cunning when they are actually rather ignorant about a situation.

*widespread both within administration and political circles and among the Greek citizens until today. And now, what causes further anxiety is not only the 60.000 migrants that have remained in Greece but also the worry that if we manage to deal with these 60.000 then the French or the Dutch governments will maybe send more back to Greece" (*R41).

The "Willkommenskultur' of the European Union and its northern Member States was destined to be transient. The EU – Turkey deal and the closing of the Balkan Route were the final blows to the misplaced expectations of the Greek State about its minimal and benevolent engagement with migrants.[32] What is particularly noteworthy here is how the convenience of comfort was pivotal in the construction of solidarity, it was experienced as "a crucial precondition for the emotional crescendo of solidarity" (R41). While the transformations and preconditions of solidarity will be discussed at length in the next chapter, it is important to realize here how comfort preludes the Greek entrapment in a nexus of policies that were either designed to reach dead-ends or tailored to restrict and immobilize migrants in the country, effectively transforming the country into a migratory buffer zone.

4.4.2 Exception as bargain

Between comfort and entrapment, one further aspect to be discussed is that of exception being a bargaining chip in the political negotiations between Greece and Europe. It will be suggested here that the focus of debate around funding opens up a controversial and perhaps misleading enmeshment between the financial support of the refugee 'crisis' and the austerity measures implemented during the years of the Greek economic 'crisis'. Moreover, it will be explored whether the substantial financial support opened up a possibility for the funding mechanisms to be utilized in a process of a *quid pro quo* between Greece and Europe, with the former agreeing to shoulder the administrative burden of receiving asylum seekers and weathering the 'crisis' and the later keeping the 'spigot' of financial support open in return.

From 2015 until the end of 2019 the combined funding for Greece exceeded 2 billion euros. The country has received €1.03 billion from the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF), €397.6 million from the Internal Security Fund (ESF) and €644.5 million from the

[32] For the closing of the Balkan Route, see https://frontex.europa.eu/we-know/migratory-routes/western-balkan-route/ where it is stated that "following the coordinated restriction measures implemented throughout the region, in destination countries and the Aegean Sea, the non-regional flow transiting the Western Balkans considerably subsided, declining almost every month, from 128 000 illegal border-crossings in January down to roughly 3 000 in December 2016."

Emergency Support Instrument (ESI). Notably, the ESI is described as a mechanism providing support to address large humanitarian needs within the Union when a Member State can no longer cope, "in the spirit of solidarity and in exceptional circumstances" (European Commission, 2020). Approximately 800 million euros were awarded as emergency assistance, 580 million of which has been distributed to the Greek government and several NGOs. This is how Greece is expected to deal with its mid- and long-term future as a buffer state. In June 2016, the Vice President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini announced that the EU was:

> *"ready to increase financial and operational support and to invest in long-term economic and social development, security, rule of law and human rights, improving people's life and tackling the drivers of migration"*(European Commission, 2016d).

Such grandiose announcements were met on the ground with the realities of the implementation of the EU-Turkey Declaration that effectively re-animated explicit deterrence politics. The trade of financial support for the obedient 'cooperation' of Greece in enforcing the Declaration is termed by a respondent as being 'completely hand in hand' (R25):

> *"the implementation of a deterrence policy with the geographical restriction of asylum seekers in the islands came with an implicit 'transaction'*" (R25).

The concept of such a 'transaction' is not novel in the Greek political scenery. In 2012 a parliamentarian from the center-right political party of New Democracy had tweeted "Keep calm! Addressing the national problem of illegal immigration also has its profits! Cold, hard European cash" (Carastathis, 2015:84).[33] However, the considerable funding could not effectively overcome the long-standing deficiencies of the Greek state and institutions, namely, the lack of institutional co-ordination, the slow-paced bureaucracy and the absence of efficient planning. A respondent from UNHCR describes a pertinent event:

> *"Greece certainly did a poor job in managing the funding. I do not mean that money 'disappeared', I mean it was not an organized effort. In summer 2016, I happened to*

[33] It is important to note here that 2012 was a significant year regarding intensity of anti-migrant rhetoric and violence. As discussed in the introduction, 2012 was the year that the Golden Dawn entered the Greek Parliament and the year of the Evros wall and of the Xenios Zeus police force ; a year, in which xenophobia and racism ran rampant. Comparing the political climate surrounding migration in 2012 and 2015-6 leads to a troubling observation of convergence rather than divergence. Migration was still considered a 'national problem' and the European cash was a 'transaction' guaranteeing Greece's complicity in an unfair policy system.

be present in a tele-conference with the DG ECHO and a guy from Brussels was complaining because they had requested a list designating which camps would be made permanent and which would close. The request was sent to the Ministry of Migration in May and this teleconference took place in July. The NGOs and the UNHCR were also asking the same thing, because the Ministry was supposed to delegate the European funding to the UNHCR which in turn would fix the camps and tend to the winterization process. So, DG ECHO was asking for this list since May and the Ministry provided the list in late October. By then, we did not even have the time needed to order the containers – much less to co-ordinate with our site planners who would decide where and how the containers would be placed and whether construction was needed for electricity and sewerage. There was an advisor of Minister Mouzalas present in the tele-conference who was arguing that the Commission should derogate from some bureaucratic procedures because Greece is in emergency mode and the winter is coming fast. So the guy from Brussels responded, very frustrated, 'We all knew winter was coming, as it does every year'. When the borders are closed since March and the DG ECHO pledges to offer funding already in May but asks the Ministry to co-ordinate the tasks, the Ministry cannot wait until October to respond. Saying that we are in emergency mode is not valid 6 months after the closing of borders" (R9).

Notions of exception as comfort and as bargain are entangled in showing how the pre-disposition of the Greek State remained consistently in the realm of denial and how emergency was 'milked' as a justification to avoid responsibility and postpone any organized use of the funding, relying instead on the expectation of further derogation. The argument of the Minister's advisor clearly reflects a blind hope for generous leniency towards inconsistency and delay. The ramifications of this narrow-minded and patchwork approach to the EU funding was also underlined by a respondent who was, at the time of interview, working for the Asylum Service in Athens. In early 2019 the short-sighted solutions enacted by the Greek State again verified the lack of a decisive strategy that suggests a prolongation of emergency was preferable to the realization of permanence:

"the discussion about money is critical exactly because the country has no serious plan of integration and is just using the funds that the EU is channeling to the UNHRC or other organizations in order to distribute cash assistance or renting apartments. On their own, these actions do not lead to integration. Instead, they function as facilitators of institutionalization and rather reproduce the problem. " (R41)

This version of 'official' or 'emergency' monetary support is just one of the modes of compensation the country could request. There are various other modes that could be negotiated, both material and symbolic. The summer of 2015 was particularly turbulent because of the one million refugees crossing the Aegean Sea. For Greece it was a political roller-coaster following the polarizing referendum on the country's bailout called by the newly appointed government of SYRIZA.[34] While extreme, the political upheaval sparked by the vote was only temporary, with the Greek Prime Minister signing the bailout agreement a week later, sparking another flashpoint of political turmoil. The events of that summer marked both a temporal and political interweaving of the two crises - the refugee and the financial. A respondent who worked for the Municipality of Athens remarks:

> *In 2015 a crucial mistake was made: the government brought the refugee crisis in the negotiation table [regarding austerity] thinking this could be an advantage. I believe that, in that moment, migration should not have been part of the discussion – and let me remind you that at some point there was even a discussion for debt alleviation in exchange to refugee reception (R22)*

The predicament of 'debt alleviation for refugee reception' might have remained as speculative or as a common secret between those working within the domain of migration and asylum. As one respondent from a civil society organization sternly observed:

> "*Some things do not need to be made explicit – they are just part of the EU's transactional modus operandi. All the member states participate in this 'bazaar', going after whatever they can gain. It is part of the negotiation process"* (R27)

By 2018 the connection was however made explicit. In June 2018 rumors circulated surrounding the EU summit between the German chancellor and other Prime Ministers, whereby Merkel was purportedly exploring the possibility of securing bilateral agreements with Greece and other Mediterranean countries for the return of migrants to these frontline States. Greek and international media were quick to highlight the undertone of reciprocity in these negotiations, placing it in the context of the turbulent relationships between Germany and the Southern European States following the former's stern stance on financial solidarity in the

[34] SYRIZA (ΣΥΡΙΖΑ in Greek) is an abbreviation for the Coalition of the Radical Left, is a political party founded in 2004. In the national elections of January 2015, it received 36% of the votes, becoming the largest party in the Greek parliament. On the 5th of July 2015, the majority of the Greek people voted 'No' to the terms for the country's remaining in the single currency in a controversial referendum -despite the risks of a financial collapse and an imminent exit from the Eurozone.

preceding years of the fiscal crisis. As the conservative German opposition was urging the Chancellor to stop perusing Europe with a checkbook at hand, ready to make 'dirty deals', the chatter surrounding the process of bargaining became more and more pronounced (Independent, 2018; Protagon 2018). What is most important here is not whether an agreement was reached, but that the underlying modus operandi of the actors involved yet another metaphorical 'salute' to the logic of exception:

> *"in this informal summit nothing solid was decided, but it became clear once again that the idea is to have an extra-institutional solution that corroborates how the EU functions 'à la carte'… one of the only conclusions was in regards to the increased responsibility of Greece, Italy and Spain. If you listen to Sanchez's comments after the summit, the connection between financial aid and the burden of handling the refugee crisis is explicit… this is not about an agreement between member states or about the implementation of already existing regulations – it is about the manner of implementation"* (R22) [35]

It is important to discuss this 'manner of implementation' since it indicates the perilous particularities of how the refugee 'crisis' is utilized as a counterbalancing to the austerity measures. As a high-ranking public officer in the municipality of Athens argues, this counterbalancing significantly 'misses the mark' of a promising, even advantageous framing of a bargain that would put the notion of 'investment' - rather than 'trade' – in the center of focus:

> *"When dealing with a country that faces significant immigration flows, the point is to invest more in dealing with these flows. Giving money to this country as a favor is really not the point. Even if the EU wants Greece to become a buffer zone, they have to pay for it. The discussion should not be predicated as a financial negotiation along the lines of 'keep the thousands of migrants and we will reduce your debt'. This situation can be an opportunity. Greece can agree to handle the 'difficult' cases – all those left behind after the skilled and educated asylum seekers reach other European countries… But*

[35] In August 2018, the "Administrative Arrangement Agreement between the Ministry of Migration Policy of the Hellenic Republic and the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community of the Federal Republic of Germany on the cooperation when refusing entry into persons seeking protection in the context of temporary checks at the internal German-Austrian border" was reached, annexed in letters exchanged between the authorities of the two countries, thus never acquiring the form of an official bilateral agreement or protocol (AIDA, 2018:68). The 'agreement' introduced a fast-track procedure that was criticized for circumventing the rules and procedural safeguards and guarantees laid down by European legislation. See also https://rsaegean.org/en/the-administrative-arrangement-between-greece-and-germany/.

> *this agreement should come with additional measures. Extra challenges mean extra funding. Then Greece can draft a serious and solid reception system and ask the EU to invest in it: request extra budget, demand 300 employment positions for the Asylum Service and so on. Devise a proper plan so that the EU knows you mean business"* (R22).

Such a plan, even with its inherent asymmetries, was ultimately never orchestrated and the history of handling the crisis remained devoid of meaning, if meaning is to be perceived as the creation of "*infrastructure, dynamic response and political capital"* (R42). Instead, the country was left with fragile political capital predicated on an implicit understanding that Greece did the 'dirty work' without admitting to it, so that the European Union and its leaders will protect the country's (financial) interests in the future (R42).

Such negotiations crystallize as a risky bond between the two crises in political discourse and public opinion. On the one hand, a bargaining that includes the simultaneous articulation of the two crises, even if it eventually succeeds, triggers an alternative version of the long-standing xenophobic narrative that connects financial austerity and unemployment with migration, the latter being framed as an aggravating factor upon the former. It is crucial to here realize that the entangling of migration developments with austerity measures, when the framing dictates that the former justifies as an alleviation from the latter, implicitly fosters a causal relationship between the two. This causality fosters hostility against migrants exactly because the alleviation only arrives as a consequence of the migrant presence and when the ensuing funding is directed towards the foreigner and not the national citizen (see chapter 6 for related analysis). Furthermore, the entanglement of the crises bolsters a cruel, managerial reaction to human mobility – a cynical but expected diminution of the 'humanitarian burden for financial support' narrative that effectively sets a trap for Greece. A biopolitical normalization is initiated whereby humanitarianism is pitted against funding and human life is increasingly valued in financial terms – a typical manifestation of neoliberal governmentality. This tendency is not only alarming because of the dehumanization it encourages but, crucially, because of the danger of its own inevitable failure, a failure of trade between prolonged suspension of law and funding packages.

This section elaborated upon the inherent problems encountered when framing the emergency of the refugee 'crisis' and outlined its exceptional consequences as a platform for symbolic and material bargaining between Greece and the European Union. It also discussed the

ramifications that such a bargain could entail in the instance of its re-contextualization beyond the refugee 'crisis', as a negotiation tool that also enveloped the pre-existing economic 'crisis'.

4.4.3 Exception as entrapment

The short-sightedness of comfort and the unstable, risky grounds of bargain (as exercised and manifested by the Greek State) inevitably lead to a conceptualization of exception as entrapment. This entrapment can be credited partly to the mishandlings of the Greek State and partly to the European Union, in their implementation of a political design that would streamline a policy framework designed to lead Greece to a considerable impasse. On the one hand, the Greek government erroneously expected the continuation of a benevolent suspension. On the other, with the EU's attempts at pooling national sovereignty, the suspension swiftly reshaped into different, less benevolent configurations that victimized Greece. But did Greece have an option in this 'exceptional' formation? Was it a situation it could afford to change?

In his State of the Union Address in September 2016, former President of the Commission Jean- Claude Juncker remarked: "*When it comes to managing the refugee crisis, we have started to see solidarity. I am convinced much more solidarity is needed. But I also know that solidarity must be given voluntarily. It must come from the heart. It cannot be forced*." (European Commission, 2016d). The fallacy of solidarity is vividly outlined in these few words. Invoking again the processes of dysnomie here, it would be interesting to see how solidarity is interwoven with sovereignty, particularly in the manner that it is wielded in the political discourse at the European Union level. I would suggest that Juncker's quote is an implicit comment on the limits of the pooling of sovereignty – rather than on solidarity. The crucial observation here is whether or not a country is in a position to decide about said pooling. In the inevitable process of shifting competences and power from national to supranational and transnational bodies, "*the more powerful a government is, the more it has to lose by contributing to such pooling of sovereignty*" (Passas, 1999:411). Crucially then, the less powerful a government the less influence it has on such a process. It is to be argued here that Greece was not able to resist the dysnomic processes. This is due in part to its geographical positioning, its recent history as a European counterpart that only caused problems for the Union since the late 2000s, and its misplaced investment in the prolongation of European solidarity. To be clear, the dysnomic processes described here do not mean that Greece ceded its national sovereignty in legal terms. Rather, the dynamics explored in the following pages allude to an immense political pressure under which legal and quasi-legal texts and policies have been adopted and implemented (with questionable success) by the nation. From this

perspective the Greek State witnessed policy developments in the first years of the 'crisis' with limited influence, heavily overwhelmed by the machinations of exception, and increasingly entrapped in the *status quo* it created. In the following sections will discuss some of the most controversial policies that became symbolic of the European response to the 'crisis' –key moments that rendered Greece entangled in the webs of exception.

4.4.3.1 The Relocation Scheme

The Relocation Scheme outlined above (section 3) provides initial insight into how the dynamics of entrapment began taking shape. One respondent with previous experience in policy and advocacy argued:

> *"for someone who has the most basic knowledge of migration policy, the relocation scheme was something that could only make you laugh. It was a purely symbolic move. ... the rationale was to build a system that was not meant to work – like in the case of the Dublin Regulation. Relocation was predicated on migrants making a trip that did not make sense. If you really want to bring people to Greece in order to relocate them, go to Turkey and bring them straight to the mainland. Why should the asylum seeker make the trip, pay for the smuggling fee, get on the boat to reach the hotspots while running the risk of drowning on his way? Why involve EUROPOL, UNICEF, EASO, FRONTEX, the Greek Police and UNHCR –all that costly bureaucracy? So on the one hand all this funding is channeled and wasted, and at the same time you maintain the push factor that dictates that the trip is dangerous"* (R27)

The implementation of the Scheme met significant obstacles – a direct consequence of the inherent flaws it suffered from (Barbulescu, 2017; Gerasopoulos, 2018). It is appropriate to follow the progress of the Scheme through the reports published by the European Commission during 2016 and 2017, or rather trace the lack of said progress. Relocation was also heralded as "*proof of European solidarity*" by Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitrios Avramopoulos (Eleftheros Typos, 2016). What remained to be seen is how 'voluntarily' this European solidarity would be extended. From an early stage the rates of relocation were significantly low, given than a number of countries were consistently rejecting the applications they received under the distribution quota of the Scheme. By the end of 2016, in the eighth report on Relocation, the European Commission was stipulating that it reserves the right to act against those Member States that are not complying with their obligations (European Commission, 2016e). As the Dublin Regulation was reinstated in early 2017 (AIDA,

2018), a development that would place further burden on Greece, the Commission highlighted in its Relocation reports the urgent need for Member States to exercise a fair sharing of responsibility –to actively show their solidarity in alleviating the pressures on Greece, but this 'solidarity' could clearly not be forced (European Commission, 2017a).[36] By the eleventh report, the situation was remarkably similar:

> "*Hungary and Poland are still not participating in the relocation scheme therefore not fulfilling their legal obligations. The Czech Republic has not pledged since May 2016 and has not relocated anyone since August 2016... Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovakia are relocating on a very limited basis…"* (European Commission, 2017b:3)

While the EC acknowledged that numerous countries were in continuous breach of their legal obligations, warning for the possibility of infringement procedures being launched against those states, ultimately no sanctions or penalties were imposed. (European Commission, 2017c).[37] This does not come as a surprise given what was politically at stake: the (symbolic) protection of national sovereignty and borders. Countries that were able to fend off the possibility of accepting relocating asylum seekers would welcome the opportunity to 'buy out' of the responsibilities, even in the form of monetary sanctions (Collett, 2015). This alternative would not only absolve them from dealing with the realities of adjudication and resettlement but would offer the political advantage of a narrative in which the respective member states managed to 'stand their ground' against the migrant wave. Amidst the Eurosceptic and populist political scenery, the connotations of 'protection' far outweigh any sanction the Commission could impose.

By the end of 2017 the initial goal of the scheme was met – at least in terms of numbers. Out of the 27,457 cases that were handled in Greece, 24,906 applications were sent by Greece, 22,815 were accepted by Member-States and 30,836 places were pledged by Member-states (Greek Ombudsman, 2019:30). However, this notion of 'success' is misleading and does not account for one of the most problematic aspects of the Scheme:

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[36] It should be noted that, despite the proclaimed resumption of the Dublin Regulation, the numbers of returns to Greece were very limited. For example, in 2019, "the Greek Dublin Unit received 12,718 incoming requests, coming predominantly from Germany (8,874), compared to 9,142 incoming requests in 2018. Of those, only 710 were accepted" (AIDA, 2019:20)

[37] By spring 2020 the General Court of the European Unionruled that Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic have failed to uphold their relocation obligations. The 'sanction' ordered was that the aforementioned member states should cover the costs of the cases brought in. See https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=224882&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=368818

> *"The structure of the relocation scheme seemed to predetermine its results. By excluding a) asylum seekers crossing the Greek sea borders after the entry into force of the EU-Turkey Joint Statement on 20.3.2016, as well as b) all nationals from countries having a European recognition rate lower than 75%, the relocation scheme's failure to reach the numbers perceived in 2015 appears to be a self-fulfilled prophecy. The lack of legal consistency of the scheme is obvious, given that the Council Decisions on Relocation were never legally amended by the EU-Turkey Joint Statement… Therefore, one may conclude that by accepting the actual amendment of the relocation scheme in practice by the EU-Turkey Joint Statement, the EU Member-States and the Commission limited the scope of the relocation scheme to a small fragment of asylum seekers that had nothing to do with the initial number of predictions of 2015*." (Greek Ombudsman, 2019:49)

An exploration of the Relocation issues inevitably stumbles upon the EU-Turkey Joint Declaration – especially when it comes to tracing the process of entrapment. One respondent noted how the de facto 'amendment' of the Relocation Scheme, that precluded any asylum seeker that entered after the Joint Declaration from having access, did not result or derive from any formal decision and was never officially acknowledged by the Greek authorities:

> *"It was never made formally explicit that the Joint Declaration blocked the Relocation process. They just arbitrarily set a date that they argue was set just because they had to signify the entry of the Scheme into force – but this date roughly coincides with the entry into force date of the Declaration. The Greek Asylum Service never admitted that the Joint Declaration functions as a reason of exclusion from Relocation – it is never mentioned as such in cases where Relocation is denied. It is just that 'magically' the dates overlap. As a result, all entries of asylum seekers after March 2016 are practically criminalized. Of course, legally speaking, the Relocation and the Joint Declaration both accessed the admissibility of an application – the Relocation would examine whether an application could fall under the relevant Scheme and the Joint Declaration would examine admissibility to decide whether the applicant should be sent back to Turkey. So they could not be examined together*" (R27).

The complexities and questionable success of the implementation of the Relocation Scheme serve to highlight the exception-as-entrapment frame for the Greek context. On the one hand, Greece had limited political capital to resist or veto the implementation of the Scheme as other

Member States did. This is a result of the disadvantaged position of the country within the EU and of its particular geographical position as a country on the borders of Europe. The challenges in maintaining its sovereignty exposed the country to a risk of a potentially failing Scheme and showcased how Greece was left to deal with a flawed policy apparatus. On the other hand, even if the numbers and statistical projections were met, valid concerns were to be raised over the actual legality of the manner of implementation. A trend emerges whereby the Greek State and its authorities can only regulate and handle the migration flows by engaging with the enforcement of questionable (quasi)legal tools that violate human rights and international law. Crucially then, in enforcing said policies, Greece cannot 'blame' anyone else for its infringements on human rights – because the responsibility of enforcing the policy apparatus is considered an exercise of national sovereignty.

4.4.3.2 The EU-Turkey Statement – Laying the trap

The EU-Turkey Joint Declaration presents the most paradigmatic case of entrapment resulting from the state of exception. The following discussion will argue that the setup, implementation, and burden of responsibility for the Declarations success or failure was designed to push Greece towards unrealistic and unwieldly legal and policy frameworks, and has had profound ramifications for both the European and Greek political landscape.

The thread begins during the latter days of 2015, as objections were mounted towards to the passage of asylum seekers through Idomeni towards the Northern European countries and discussions surrounding a possible closure of the Balkan route intensified. Several events between December 2015 and February 2016 set in motion what can be described as a pre-determined course of action by the European Union (Fotiadis, 2017). On the 27th of January 2016, the College of Commissioners convened to discuss the challenges and future of the Schengen Agreement. Following that meeting, the Vice President of the EC issued the following tweet: "*Draft Schengen eval. Report on #Greece: the country is seriously neglecting its obligations when it comes to external border controls #EC".*[38] Whilst concise, the tweet was blunt in painting a grim picture of the Greek State, indicating that the report – which was based on unannounced visits to the Greek-Turkish land border and to Chios and Samos during November 2015 – had concluded that the country wilfully neglected its obligations. Whilst not made public, versions of the report were leaked to the press. Important to note are the

[38] https://twitter.com/vdombrovskis/status/692326755445661696

discrepancies detected between the former and latter versions of the draft. Crucially, the early version of the draft suggests that:

> "*Greek authorities are under extreme pressure while facing large numbers of Syrian and other irregular migrants crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey. Border surveillance has mainly turned from border protection into search and rescue operations which demands [sic] significant efforts from the Greek authorities and other stakeholders in order to accommodate identity and register the very high number of irregular migrants that are arriving. Certain important shortcomings and challenges must be overcome and dealt with…The prevailing border situation at the Greek-Turkish land border was under control during the last on-site visit. Border control is conducted in a reliable way but there are clear shortcomings in some parts of the border management system*" (see Aggelidis, 2016).

In contrast to this neutral vocabulary, a latter version included some clear changes in terms of linguistic choices:

> "*There are serious deficiencies in the carrying out of external border controls that must be overcome… Greece is seriously neglecting its obligations… As regards the situation at the Greek-Turkish land borders, the onsite visit identified clear deficiencies in the carrying out of border controls*" (Aggelidis, 2016; European Council, 2016c).

Whilst subtle, the changes crucially evince an acknowledgement of the challenging predicament on the sea border as well as the generally positive assessment for the land border situation, with "clear deficiencies" being invoked repeatedly (ECCEU, 2016). Simultaneously, the ominous undertone of "serious neglect" featured in the aforementioned tweet takes center stage. The changes in the reports occurred without a new onsite examination, inviting concern surrounding the political agenda behind the discord between the versions; an agenda that aims to create an unfavorable climate around Greece to pre-empt any ensuing policy developments that would be accepted with little resistance. Adding to this questionable discourse, Migration and Home Affairs Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos announced after the Commissioners' College:

> "*If we want to maintain our internal area of free movement, we must better manage our external borders... Substantial improvements are needed to ensure the proper*

reception, registration, relocation or return of migrants in order to bring Schengen functioning back to normal, without internal border controls"[39]

A journalist that had closely followed the described events recalls how:

"There was a period where several TV channels would report that Greece was failing the Schengen evaluation mechanisms. It got to the point where SKAI channel had a full-screen message that read: 'the process of excluding Greece from the Schengen Agreement has started'. A part of the media was eager to multiply the responsibility of the government for this chaos and this failure – that it was the government's fault that Europe wanted to expel us" (R42)[40]

Sliding into a general climate of political and public dismay, the government stood with its back against the wall and the country was unable to raise any objections to the foreseeable policy developments. In this dysnomic predicament, the Joint Declaration came into effect in March 2016 and soon after a multitude of objections were raised over its basic premises, its legitimacy, and both its legal and material consequences. In responding to these concerns, the workings of exception-as-entrapment can be seen in full throttle.

4.4.3.3 How (not) to enforce a (non)legal Statement

According to the majority of official respondents, one of the fundamental issues with the Joint Declaration was precisely the fact that it was a non-legal document, despite having produced legally binding effects. At the same time, the deal was not attributable to any EU body or institution – exemplifying the lack of accountability that pervades states of exception. In February 2017 the General Court of the European Union declared how "*it lacks jurisdiction to hear and determine the actions brought by three asylum seekers against the EU-Turkey statement which seeks to resolve the migration crisis"* (General Court of the European Union, 2017). The asylum seekers in question had submitted their applications for asylum in Greece and given that - based on the provisions of the Deal - they risked being returned to Turkey should their applications be rejected, they brought actions before the General Court. The applicants wished to challenge the legality of the Joint Declaration, arguing that the statement

[39] For further information, see https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/commission-discusses-draft-schengen-evaluation-report-greece

[40] This accusation was inevitably connected to the narrative of dangerous SYRIZA politicians that fail to protect the country and jeopardize its best interests – while it should also be noted that the period discussed here (late 2015) was the immediate period following SYRIZA's Referendum regarding the Third Memorandum.

infringes upon the rules of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) as well as the procedure for the conclusion of international agreements by the EU. The Court concluded in its press release that:

> *"neither the European Council nor any other institution of the EU decided to conclude an agreement with the Turkish Government on the subject of the migration crisis. For the sake of completeness… the Court considers that, even supposing that an international agreement could have been informally concluded during the meeting of 18 March 2016, something which has been denied by the European Council, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission in the present cases, that agreement would have been an agreement concluded by the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the EU and the Turkish Prime Minister*" (General Court of the European Union, 2017)

Over a year later in September 2018, the Court reproduced similar rhetoric when finally dismissing the appeal lodged by the asylum seekers as "manifestly inadmissible" – therefore evading an examination of the substance of the appellants' claims.[41] Commenting on the vagueness of such denial of responsibility on the part of EU institutions, one respondent remarked how:

> "*Being the weak link of the EU, there were not many things the country could have done. But the main thing that Greece should have done was to highlight the hypocrisy of this whole process. We all know that the EU-Turkey deal is allegedly not a deal between the EU and Turkey. As if the Turkish delegate happened to pass by during the summit meetings for migration, and the European delegates happened to invite him for drinks on the roof where, by the way, they signed a deal – which, by the way, is funded by EU budget"* (R27)

Although comical in its description, the absurdity of the claim is apparent. What is also repeated is the limited political power that Greece maintained over the unfolding of events. The deliberate fuzziness surrounding the legal essence of the Statement was manifest in its purported enforcement. It is pertinent to examine how, by insisting the non-attributability of the Statement to the EU, the fast-track border procedure outlined in the Statement was realized.

[41] For the full text of the appeal CJEU, Cases C-208/17 P, C-209/17 P and 210/17 P *NF, NG and NM v European Council*, Order of 12 September 2018. Available at: https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=205744&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1

Despite its own legal ambiguity, the principal tenets of the Deal were incorporated into the Greek legal framework through law 4375/2016, whereby an extremely truncated fast-track border procedure was established (AIDA, 2016). This fast-track border procedure applied to all arrivals after the 20th of March of 2016 and was positioned to take place in the Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) of Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos. Asylum applications were largely judged on grounds of admissibility, which meant that if it was decided that Turkey constitutes a 'safe third' or 'first country of asylum' for the applicant, they would be returned there. However, for the applicants to actually be returned the decisions are required to refer to a legal text based on which the return would take place. Since the Statement was conveniently rendered non-legal, several legal tools had to fill that vacuum. According to the Ministry of Interiors, in 2017, beyond the legally ambiguous Statement, the legal framework for the returns consisted of the following:

> "*a) The bilateral Greek-Turkish Readmission Protocol which was signed in Athens on November 8, 2001…*
>
> *b) The Readmission Agreement between the European Union and Turkey... As of June 1, 2016, it entered into force for third-country nationals, replacing the bilateral Greek-Turkish Readmission Protocol. However, at the moment the Greek government is in negotiations with the Turkish authorities and the signing of the Implementing Protocol is pending.*
>
> *c) The EU-Turkey Joint Declaration of 18 March 2016."* (Greek Government, 2017) [42]

This legal 'patchwork' approach is indicative of an attempt to pre-emptively defend the hollow and fragile legal grounds on which the rejection of applications (the returns provisioned in the fast-track procedure) were predicated upon. As a respondent from a civil society organization stipulated:

> *"Exactly because the Statement was not enough, there was an urgent need to update the [bilateral] Readmission Protocol which, although not inactive, was quite old. If the Statement constituted sufficient legal grounds [for returns], we would not hasten to update the Protocol. So, if you read through a decision, a dozen different legal texts are cited. It is clear that there have been discussions within the government because*

[42] See https://government.gov.gr/ischion-nomiko-plesio-gia-tis-epistrofes-paratipon-metanaston-stin-tourkia/

> *they realize this might turn against them. And now the Protocol is used as a pressure point"* (R27)

In understanding the meaning of this 'pressure point' a glance must be cast backwards to the coup d'état attempt in July 2016 against President Erdogan in Turkey. In the aftermath of its failure, eight members of the Turkish military personnel fled to Greece where they applied for asylum. Given the turbulent political past between the two countries a series of legal and political events ensued, with the Turkish authorities repeatedly demanding the extradition of the soldiers. Ultimately, the Greek Supreme Court was not convinced that the eight would face a fair trial in Turkey and thus denied the extradition (Reuters, 2018). In June of 2018, in a concise 'response' to the court's judgment, Turkey suspended the implementation of the Greek-Turkish Readmission Protocol (Reuters, 2018b). The ramifications of this development were explicated by a lawyer:

> "*what is simplistically repeated is that the EU-Turkey Statement is suspended. That is not true. The Turkish president 'froze' the implementation of the Greek-Turkish Readmission Protocol… So what is happening now is that the Turkish side is, quite ingeniously, not backing down on the EU-Turkey deal, for which it has received a generous funding - but they take out of the equation the only legal tool to implement the Deal."* (R4)

One can observe how the muddy waters of a policy framework, in which sovereignty is exercised outside and beyond the rule of law, render the exception indistinguishable to the normality, allowing the 'crisis' of migration to be transposed: a European problem becomes Greek.

The fact that the Statement is still in effect at the time of writing despite being introduced as a temporary and extraordinary solution speaks volumes to the contingency of exception. Numerous reports have been published in the years since 2015 that express concerns over the due process guarantees, the quality and mode of conduct of admissibility interviews, and the overall approach of the Statement for creating considerable challenges to fundamental human rights. Ironically enough, many of these reports have been authored by organizations of the European Union, the very institution that went to great lengths to deny any responsibility for the 'parenthood' of the Statement – thus framing and confining Greece to the role of the irresponsible Member State culpable for the inhumane situations in the islands. This process of exception breeds a set of rules *"that are not binding by virtue of established law or modes*

of legitimation, but fully discretionary, even arbitrary, wielded by officials who interpret them unilaterally and decide the condition and form of their invocation" (Butler, 2004:61). These rules do not however reinstate the sovereign power as Butler suggested, but rather manifest the ways the sovereign state (Greece) has limited power or choice in their enforcement – delineating the entrapment in the dysnomic political environment.

4.4.3.4 Reflections of entrapment

The following section will elaborate on what will be termed 'reflections' of entrapment, reflections referring to a number of issues that present themselves during Greece's implementation of the Statement through its sovereign power. There is to be observed a sensitive (im)balance between an inescapable obedience (a result of the dead-end situation that Greece found itself in) and a complicity of the Greek state to demonstrate the phased implementation of repression, deterrence, and detention that pervaded the politically 'toxic' deal.

An important observation following the signing of the Statement was the fast-track border procedure being largely implemented as an admissibility check based on the grounds of whether or not Turkey was a 'safe third country', irrespective of any other relevant merit. Immediate decisions of rejection for all Syrians were subsequently identical and repetitive, and therefore failed to provide an individualized assessment. They were further outdated insofar as they did not account for developments in the intervening period, such as the legal framework in Turkish that included the derogation from the principle of non-refoulement (AIDA, 2018:16). This controversial assumption of the 'safe third country' was systematically rebuked in the second instance by the so called 'Backlog' Appeals Committees (in 390 out of 393 decisions), which effectively blocked implementation of the Statement (Amnesty International, 2017).[43] One respondent notes how:

> "*the Backlog Committees had the capacity and the experience to deal with the situation. In the past, they had dealt with very challenging decisions – back when first instance decisions on asylum where issued by the Greek Police. They were called to examine about two thousands cases. The first cases they examined were concerning Syrian*

[43] These were 3-member committees, established long before the 'crisis' of 2015. However, law 4375/2016, while it anticipated the establishment and operation of separate Appeals Committees, also designated a transitional regime. Namely, the law provides that "appeals submitted from the day of its publication (3 April 2016) and until the restart of the operation of Appeals Committees… including appeals against decisions rejecting the applications as inadmissible in the framework of the EU-Turkey statement, were to be examined by Backlog Appeal Committees" (AIDA, 2016:242)

asylum applicants – of course the Backlog Committees were considering their application admissible and were granting them asylum" (R27).

Interesting to note is how the European Commission heralded this development as being proof of no blanket or automatic returns following the Statement and the safeguards of individual assessment being in place (Gkliati, 2017). Only a month after the first decision of the Backlog Committees however, following allegations over their lack of objectivity, a new law was adopted by the Greek Parliament under a fast-track legislative procedure that provisioned the amendment of the composition of the Appeals Committees. This new law enabled the establishment of the 'Independent Appeals' Committees', composed by two administrative judges selected by the General Commissioner for Administrative Courts and another member selected by the UNHCR.[44] This abrupt modification took place after reported pressure from the EU for Greece to respond to an overwhelming majority of decisions that reversed the first decision of the Asylum Service (AIDA, 2016:14), with the European Commission urging for the expedition of returns to Turkey and emphasizing the need for new Committees to take the burden off the Backlog Committees (EU Observer, 2016)[45]. Sure enough, the Independent Appeals' Committees issued second instance decisions that systematically upheld the first instance inadmissibility decisions, ruling that Turkey is a safe third country and further signifying a decisive change of course from the Backlog Committees (Amnesty International, 2017; AIDA, 2019).

The new composition transformed most of the Committees into State actors, raising critical issues regarding the constitutionality and political expediency behind the amendment. As regards the former issue, in 2017 the Greek Council of State ruled that the presence of administrative judges suggested that law 4399/2016 did not violate the Constitution (Gkliati, 2017b). Regards the latter issue of expediency, one respondent talks of a purposefulness behind the amendment:

"the administrative judges do not have the knowledge on the matter [of refugee legislation], they also have parallel tasks that they refuse to let go of – so they do not have the capacity. This leads to a highly dysfunctional system… it is a clearly deliberate political move. It is safe to assume that administrative judges are easier to control. Also

[44] See Art. 86 (3) of Law 4399/2016, Gazette 117/A/22-6-2016

[45] It is also reported that, according to an EU source, "the first decision by the backlog committees that said Turkey is not a safe country created a major upset in Brussels and in other EU capitals, prompting fears that the EU-Turkey deal could unravel".

they were given very good money to participate in these Committees. Actually, their combined salary – as judges and as committee members – was almost higher than the salary of the chair of the Supreme Court, which is forbidden by the Greek Constitution." (R27).

What is apparent is how the legal and administrative commotion involved in implementing the Statement caused significant confusion and delays, ironically in the proclaimed 'fast' border procedure. The number of returns under the Statement is pertinent: from April 2016 until August 2018 only 1690 migrants were returned to Turkey, and in the early months of 2020 this number had only reached up to 2140.[46] Simultaneously, the number of arrivals to the Aegean islands, following the abrupt drop of 2015 and early 2016, rose from approximately 30 thousand people in 2017 to almost 60 thousand people in 2019 (UNHCR, 2019). This discrepancy, combined with the manner in which the 'hotspot approach' was eventually implemented, readily reveals the most pronounced case of reflected entrapment.

A problematic feature of the hotspot approach adopted in Greece was the geographical restriction on movement, according to which asylum seekers were not transferred to the mainland, even after their de facto detention in the RICs.[47] The restriction was explicated through law 4375/2016 (Article 41) that outlined how the freedom of movement of the applicants could be restricted to a part of Greek territory based on a decision of the Director of the Asylum Service, a measure lacking in precision and questionable in its proportionality (Majcher, 2018). Immobilized on the island in which they were registered, asylum seekers had to wait for the completion of the 'fast-track' border procedure (unless they were designated as vulnerable individuals and therefore subject to different procedures), with all the complications and delays prolonging their confinement on the Aegean islands for several months. Expectedly, the geographical restriction scheme quickly led to an overpopulation of the RICs and other facilities and placed further strain on local societies. By end of 2018 the nominal capacity of the hotspots was of 6.438 whilst some 11.683 individuals were residing there, and outside of the RICs there were 8.245 places and 14.615 residents (AIDA, 2018:17). By the end of 2019 the situation had worsened significantly, with 41.899 individuals residing in RICs and other

[46] See https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/65485 for the 2017 and 2018 statistics, and see https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/returns-greece-turkey-31-march-2020 for a brief overview until March 2020.

[47] Important to clarify here is that the hotspot approach was supposedly centering on the "registration, identification, fingerprinting and debriefing of asylum seekers, as well as return operations" (European Commission 2016e) see https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/hotspot-approach_en

facilities with a reduced nominal capacity of 8.125 (AIDA,2019:22). As the policies for responding to the influx have been systematically yielding lower numbers than expected, "*the manner in which the hotspot approach is applied in Greece is not sustainable from a fundamental rights point of view*".[48] Providing a cynical and disconcerting overview of the role and purpose of the hotspots and the role that Greece has played in this 'approach', a respondent from Lesvos argued:

> "*the hotspots are a very successful case of handling and restricting a population in a 'warehouse of souls' – very far away from the center of the EU…. Greece will be the warehouse of Europe and Lesvos will be the warehouse of Greece, in a horrifyingly successful management framework which came ready 'from above' and the Greek State just co-signed*" (R5).

Greece was not only entrapped in the management framework explicated in the statement, but also in the posterity of the country that hosted, enforced and tolerated the 'nightmare of Moria' (RSA, 2020). The case of the hotspots once again signifies the reflections of entrapment, particularly in the tracing of both the fallacy of their 'temporary' character as exceptional measures of assistance to frontline Member States, and the story behind the inception of the hotspot approach itself. The notion of pooling sovereignty is once again:

> "*The hotspots stood as the most basic tenet of implementation for the border procedures and policies. To be fair… the Greek side had proposed that the hotspots would not be actual sites, meaning that they would not be sites of detention per se, but they would rather be identification procedures. What is crucial to understand here is that there is nothing new in terms of legal tools in this whole situation. These were all existent procedures that were just re-branded in an effort to underline a political determination to do things in a different way.... However, when the EU-Turkey Statement was signed, suddenly the hotspots became sites of detention because how could they send asylum seekers back to Turkey if they were not detaining the applicants as long as the border procedure was pending*?" (R27).

The trajectory of the following discussion outlines a legal and policy nexus that was, through its design and implantation, destined to fail from the outset. Reviewing the most significant impasses of the EU-Turkey Statement, influence on the already ailing Relocation Schemes,

[48] See https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-opinion-hotspots-update-03-2019_en.pdf

and the Hotspot Approach, it is clear that the respective policy nexus predicated the positioning of Greece in a strenuous socio-political milieu, with little metaphorical 'room' to act outside and against a predetermined course of events.

Greece was after all effectively rendered a country of final destination, as decreasing numbers of asylum seekers managed to slip though the deterrence mechanisms and find their way out of the islands, and even less out of the country. The unfortunate combination of flawed Greek bureaucracy and inefficiency exacerbated what was already a challenging and complex situation. The possibility of permanence, the undesirable scenario that would set the stage for the withering of the solidarity response and further pave the way for a regression of attitudes to suspicion and fear started becoming a reality. Ironically, the number of applications for asylum in Greece climbed rapidly after 2016 (after the signing of the Statement) reaching a total number of almost 100.000 pending applications in the first and second instance by the end of 2019, with this number being barely over 13.000 in 2015 (AIDA, 2019: 22).

By analyzing the 'adventures' of the Appeals' Committees and the consequences of the Hotspot Approach, this section outlined how imminent reflections of Greece's entrapment in the implementation of the migration policy apparatus. The notion of entanglement is appropriate here precisely because it highlights the self-sustaining inability of resolution that accompanies the introduction and enforcement of the EU-Turkey Statement.

4.5 Dysnomic governmentality in the absence of accountability

In early 2019 an executive from the DG ECHO office of the European Commission gave a seminar at Utrecht University on the topic of migration policy and the developments on the new Common European Asylum System. During her presentation she remarked that "*we are no longer in a crisis mode*". A few moments later, she admitted that "*as it stands, there is no burden sharing*" when it comes to handling the migratory influxes. Side by side, these two claims reveal the convenient lack of clarity that accompanies the contingency of the 'crisis' or 'emergency' in terms of its beginning or end. In a quasi-legal nexus that is designed to reach dead-ends, a crucial question asks who is to be held accountable for the inefficiencies and the maladies of the policy framework when the crisis is allegedly over? Or rather, against the backdrop of such a structurally flawed system, will the crisis ever be over? After the preceding analysis, it is already clear that it is difficult to provide an answer to questions of accountability when even the lines between crisis and non-crisis are barely distinguishable.

Having analyzed the main policy tools used to handle the refugee 'crisis' of 2015, it can be argued that the European policy framework on migration and asylum constitutes not only an inherently asymmetrical allocation of burden in terms of numbers, but also an inherently unequal and decidedly vague allocation of accountability. In substantiating this argument, it is not to be suggested that the Greek State and institutions are not or should not be held accountable. On the contrary, the preceding sections clearly demonstrate the nations shortcomings and failures in handling the 'crisis'. As a lawyer from the UNHRC observed in 2018:

> "*Greece certainly carries a large share of the responsibility on how the crisis was handled. We were not coordinated, there was not proper cooperation between the institutions and the organizations involved, there was no coordination with the Ministry of Migration. The Minister opted to handle the crisis with his own team demonstrating a lot of mistrust towards other organizations and towards delegation in general. It was a system that was very centralized and, at the same time, very informal… I was in the camp of Derveni the other day, which is just a collection of decrepit warehouses with zero sunlight and makeshift tents. I cannot accept that this camp is still operational after a year and a half. I cannot accept that the camp in Elliniko is being 'evacuated' for months – but asylum seekers are still living there. I do not care what the government has to do, they can commandeer summer camps, army barracks – but do something*"[49] (R9).

Whilst this testimony depicts the reality on the ground, it must also be noted that the label of 'management crisis', used repeatedly in the field and in political and academic discourse, may obfuscate the underlying structural dynamics at play. Namely, by describing the events discussed in the preceding sections as a 'management crisis', what may be overlooked is how the 'crisis' was (and still is) predicated on deeply embedded imbalances within the dysnomic mechanisms that dictate the asymmetries of power between national and supra-national bodies, asymmetries that, leave some nations to deal with never-ending 'crises'. The policy nexus outlined in this chapter reflects a premeditated EU agenda that goes beyond the mere attempt at deterring migrants from arriving, but rather works to justify and map out a transformation of the Union's infrastructure with regards to migration policies and external borders (Fotiadis 2017). Fotiadis (2017:8) describes this process as being "*anti-democratic at its core*", an over-

[49] Derveni is a coastal town in the region of Peloponnese and Elliniko is a eastern suburb of Athens.

accumulation of power that aims to control a structural crisis, whose institutional by-products are the very offices, bodies, and mechanisms of crisis control.

It is important to note once more that this process does not constitute a never-before-seen mode of governmentality for the European Union. As one respondent underlined:

> "*The response to the refugee 'crisis' is not about political benevolence, humanitarianism or the European identity. This is about European institutions 'making ends meet'. We have returned to an era of instrumentalization of migration"* (R27).

The notion of 'return' implies a pre-existence of structural dynamics that foster the dysnomic over-accumulation of power that delimits the temporary measures of exception. In other words, 'crisis' existed before and 'crisis' remains after in different configurations. This relativization paves the way for the fusion of sovereignty and governmentality, as dysnomic factors destabilize the former and mobilise the latter in a manner that evades questions of accountability. In the threefold analysis on the modalities of exception, the sovereignty of the Greek state either remained unexercised, succumbed to immense political pressures, or worked in a manner that ostensibly violated human rights through the enforcement of a set of quasi-legal EU policies that resulted from an alleged 'temporary' suspension of the juridical order. Butler (2004) posited that "the sovereignty produced through the suspension (or fabrication) of the rule of law, seeks to establish a rival form of political legitimacy, one with no structures of accountability built in" (2004:66). This position can be elaborated by arguing the following: the fluidity of sovereign powers being exercised in an asymmetrical fashion of unequally powerful state and supra-state actors (within the dysnomic framework) establishes a form of political legitimacy without structures of accountability, especially for the powerful (supra-state) actors involved – in this case, the European Union. Sovereignty then operates against the backdrop of legitimized non-responsibility in the exercise of biopolitical and necropolitical strategies (Mbembe, 2003).

In a related observation, another troubling aspect of the 'management crisis' discourse is that it perpetuates not only the malevolent connotations of crisis but further a biopolitical understanding of the events of the past years. Managing the 'crisis' is equal to managing the migrant populations, and consequently, the failure to manage the 'crisis' denotes the failure to manage the influx, equating to a failure to manage the migrants and asylum seekers. A clear biopolitical reading of the situation such as this invites the discourse of failure to extend to issues of borders, bolstering the threatening rupture of normality that the 'crisis' brought upon

the Greek people. As a result, the unsuccessful management of the crisis comes with two crucial consequences. The first is a legitimation of the targeting and dehumanization of migrants as the source of the 'crisis'. Managed, moved, immobilized, restricted, prohibited, and rejected by the policy nexus, the migrants are set to fulfill the biopolitical project that renders them permanent Others. At the same time, entrapment in the mechanisms of exception and failure to manage the 'crisis' brings forward intense feelings of betrayal and an overwhelming sense of defeat.[50] It is expected then that a vast majority of Greek people – a staggering 92% - were explicitly disapproving of how the European Union handled the refugee 'crisis' (Pew Research Centre, 2018a). The sense of defeat is one of the most critical ways the 'crisis' of 2015 imprinted on the Greek population. A respondent from Lesvos argues:

> "*the whole story of the refugee crisis was combined with a widely popular, and not really false, political narrative on the breach of the Greek sovereignty… Due to preexisting circumstances that do not necessarily pertain to the refugee crisis, the situation now indicates that the national sovereignty is ruptured. This narrative is fertile ground for conservative reactions if not addressed properly, because this narrative tends to frame the individuals that you consider to be the 'reflection' of external influence to your country as a verification of that influence, a constant reminder that the Greek people have been deprived of their right to self-determination"* (R11).

In other words, the process of pooling sovereignty leads to the presence of migrants as constituting material, living proof of the country's victimization - a symbol of the defeat. This asymmetrical victimization is further perceived as a violation of the social contract and a trigger for distrust from the Greek people towards the Greek state. Most importantly, in the narrative of the respondent above, the migrant-Other is rendered and legitimized as an immediate target of frustration and betrayal. A growing normalization occurs whereby the movement, life, death, and overall existence of asylum seekers becomes increasingly understood as something in which the country is 'succeeding' or 'failing' to control.

[50] 'Ματαίωση' (mateosi), which is the feeling I am trying to adequately describe here, combines the sentiment of anger, frustration and betrayal and even goes beyond them by investing them with a profound sense of pessimism, futility, and fatigue.

4.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter delineated the complexities of the process whereby the policy and quasi-legal nexus employed to handle the refugee 'crisis' serves to reveal that crisis is always present. Crisis is not an "*unfortunate, shocking and non-normal exception, but a machine for consolidating a critical normality*" (Athanasiou, 2012:56). The vocabulary and conditions of emergency were examined and the modalities of the state of exception in the context of Greece after 2015 were reconstructed in a threefold division: exception as comfort, exception as bargain, and exception as entrapment. Each of these elements work independently and simultaneously as manifestations of biopolitical governmentality. Crucially, they allow us to trace the trajectory in which Greece was burdened with immense political pressure to adhere to the dysnomic processes of the 'pooling of sovereignty', pressures that entangled the country in a perpetual failure to handle the crisis, whilst the European Union heralded a humane and fair system of collective 'solidarity' while 'washing its hands' of responsibility for enforcement. Left with fragile and incapacitated policies of exception, Greece finds itself entangled in a dysnomic crisis, rather than a 'refugee crisis'. It is an entanglement engendered by the normalization of exception, in which Greece was both complicit to and confined by, as if a body suspended in webs, where every movement brings partial resolution and further entanglement. A movement of the left arm to release the right might succeed momentarily - only to result in an entwining of the rest of the body in further webs. The entanglement is then perpetuated by the intended and un-intended effects of the policy frameworks implementation. In lacking the material resources, the infrastructure, the institutional co-ordination, the administrative know-how and the political will, Greece was set on an inevitable path towards for 'crisis' – a fate reserved not only for Greece but for other countries of first entry too (Bolani *et al.*, 2016; Castelli Gattinara, 2017)

A pivotal consequence of the processes analyzed is located in the sedimentation of the perception of migration as (a state of) crisis. This perception goes beyond the refugee 'crisis' and envelops migration as a phenomenon in the ontology of crisis. Migration is (perceived as) a problem to be handled and dealt with – and failing to deal with this problem engenders frustration, feelings of futility and entrapment. In the dysnomic landscape where the state of exception is increasingly unaccountable, the continuous influx of migrants symbolizes a reality of crisis that the country cannot escape or hinder. Migration becomes yet another arena in which the Greek people are victimized by political games. The arrival of migrants is (perceived as) an unsolvable problem, and the migrant-Other becomes the projection and personification of

this disappointment and defeat. If, as Athanasiou (2012) observed, the concept of crisis is capable of transforming a structural and constant normality into something that resembles emergency and exception, then this newly legitimized normality of the refugee 'crisis' becomes a normality of dehumanization. As 'crises' become constitutive of the neo-liberal politics of migration, the proclamation of the end of a 'crisis' is only an intermission until the next. Within this exhausting continuum, what is viciously cultivated is a relativization of and a familiarization with the dehumanization of the migrant-Other. Throughout this process, observing the policy nexus surrounding the migration 'crisis' as a system that is designed to fail carries far more critical import than being a simple catchphrase: by pre-arranging its own impossibility and inefficiency, the policy framework introduces and fortifies a recurring justification for suspicion and hostility towards the migrant-Other. At the same time, the dilution and vagueness of responsibility and accountability over the 'failure', embedded as it is in the EU migration policy nexus, triggers again the need to find the most suitable target, the most vulnerable scapegoat. The migration policies of exception, envisaged by the Union and enforced – as much as they were – by Greece, should therefore be understood as a trajectory in which the enmeshment of biopolitical governmentality and sovereignty paves an exceptional path in legitimizing narratives and acts of social othering. Upon that background of cultivated and legitimized othering, the following chapter will explore the extension and retraction of solidarity as a movement towards and away from the dehumanized migrant-Other.

Chapter 5

Withering solidarity

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter substantiated the most challenging aspects of the migration policy nexus as foundational and continuous elements of a biopolitical governmentality that legitimizes othering. Functioning within this legitimation, the intricate processes of othering follow a trajectory that circumvents, delegitimizes, and counteracts the arguments that welcome the 'strangers at our door' (Bauman, 2016). This trajectory inevitably challenges the frame of solidarity, a dominant narrative of the summer of migration and a dynamic concept that perpetually finds itself in a spectrum along centripetal and centrifugal tendencies towards the migrant-Other. The following discussion will explore certain aspects of solidarity that relate to the processes that preempted its demise. Exploring the nuances and contextual specifics of (material) support to newcomers will explicate how solidarity transformed from 2015 to 2019.

The first section of this chapter shall consider the significant discursive shift from (illegal) 'immigrant' to 'refugee' that occurred in the first months of the 'crisis' and was reflected by the extension of material support to newcomers. Solidarity will then be explored as a contingent platform of profitable interactions between the incoming populations and the host society. The second section will attempt to trace the reversal of the same process, namely, how inclusion in the category of 'refugee' was delegitimized in the Greek context. Conceptualizing solidarity as a fragile negotiation, the conditions that lead to its discontinuation and withdrawal will be further presented. The first condition is the prolongation of a state of 'crisis'; against the backdrop of unresolved crisis, the category of 'refugee' comes under scrutiny and suspicion. Who is *the* 'refugee'? Who is *a* 'refugee'? How does one categorize this wave of human mobility? If one is not a refugee in need of saving, who will soon bid us farewell, what is the ontological space they occupy? These questions seek to explore how the 'crisis' in the 'refugee crisis' is projected upon the 'refugee' in the 'refugee crisis'. The condition of prolongation is inextricably linked to a shrinking willingness to recognize the migrant-Other as a 'refugee', and further signifies a retraction of the solidarity sentiment and a proliferation of categories of (un)deservingness. A delineation of categories, both old and new, and an allocation of newcomers to said categories is further afforded as a conditional check list that indicates

whether or not each newcomer is 'worthy' of support. Finally, the chapter will conclude by discussing several narratives that inject solidarity with skepticism, revolving around the fears and risks of co-existence, being expressed as legitimate worries. As such, they are not solely based in a phantasmatic fear of the Other, but rather fluctuate between a rationality of worry and a rationalization of hostility.

5.2 The promises and realities of solidarity

The summer of 2015 signified a discursive shift regarding the perception of the migrant-Other (Krzyżanowski, *et al.*, 2013; Krzyżanowski *et al*., 2018), whether in narratives evangelizing the reclaiming of the city streets from illegal immigrants, rhetoric's of humanitarian support to victims of war, or from violent pushbacks and rescue operations. The Greek people did not target the refugee but demonstrated solidarity and composure (Christopoulos, 2020). The Other-in-danger signified a new encounter with the stranger, or an encounter with a new stranger – one with the potential to become more familiar from the strangers that preceded. It thus re-opened past encounters and momentarily offered an opportunity for confrontation between the Greek and the processes of producing the Other. [51]

5.2.1 Shifting the discourse

One respondent from the municipality of Athens recalls a key moment that initiated the generation of a new image for the migrant-Other, already in 2014, well before Europe would open its borders in response to the refugee 'crisis':

> "*In November 2014, we had the refugee protests in Syntagma Square. This was the first image of a new 'kind' of refugees for Greece. Greece had received refugees before but Syrians were people fleeing from a very public ongoing war. I remember during those days I was in a meeting with the Secretary of Population and Social Cohesion in the Ministry [of Interior] where I met a refugee representative who was a judge in Syria. This was a new image for me too – he was not the stereotypical image of a person in need. This man was presiding over a court just days earlier and now he was running away with his family. It was shocking to see him cry, exactly because he could understand what we were telling him: that he could not leave the country legally - he*

[51] By preceding Others, I do not simply mean the ones that chronologically came before, but the migrant-Others as they have been constructed in in the first half of the 2010's when the financial crisis was utilized by the Golden Dawn to ontologize the Other as impure and inherently malevolent.

had to apply for asylum in Greece and wait. For all those present in this meeting this was a turning point, we were realizing the passing to a new reality" (R22)

It took several months for this event to ripple outwards and reverberate throughout Greek society. As an advocacy officer with long experience in State and non-State institutions recalls, the new government of SYRIZA pushed the political climate towards a more favorable framing of humans on the move:

"*The new government played a role in delegitimizing the notion of the 'lathrometanastis'. It became less common to throw together all the humans on the move in a trash bag with the label 'illegal immigrants'. One more thing that should probably be credited specifically to Giannis Mouzalas [the first Minister of Migration] is how he handled, familiarized and ameliorated the public opinion towards the hardships of refugees. He used the media in a politically cunning way, he addressed the Greek people speaking 'in their own language'. And this has left an imprint. It was a new message compared to the recent past - where everything was about Xenios Zeus, about migrant invasion and healthcare scares*" (R27)

The proliferation of the term 'refugee' in reference to border-crossing humans in need should be acknowledged as a movement towards humanizing the 'Other' – a remarkable shift from the 2011-2012 era. In a discussion with a former parliamentarian from SYRIZA, they recall vivid memories of 'lathrometanastis' (illegal immigrant) being used together with the illegal connotations it carried:

"During Parliamentary proceedings, I had made a remark to the then Minister of Maritime Affairs telling him that our ears were bleeding with the constant use of 'lathrometanastis' in his speech, especially given that there have been recommendations from the then Ombudsman and the Commissioner of the Council of Europe urging that parliamentarians to refrain from using the term. I told him that there are no illegal subjects of Law and his reply was that 'I'll say it again and I'll keep saying it'... Around that time I was in a taxi and the driver said 'lathrometanastis'. I asked him not to use that word and he told me 'What are you talking about, lady? If politicians use that word, why would I not?'. The use of the word by people in institutional positions provided an alibi to citizens" (R34)

Against this backdrop, another respondent argues how the long summer of migration encouraged a "numbing of the xenophobic reflexes" (R27):

> *"People that felt afraid or shut-off realized they could actually help the refugees – while of course it was expected they would just pass by Greece. This realization activated a significant part of the population. You know, a common mistake we do is that we tend to look at the polarized extremes. In the middle there, you have a number of people, somewhat afraid and somewhat perplexed – a person like my mother, so to speak… These people experienced their contradiction in a productive way during 2015 – thus triggering the narrative of Greek hospitality" (*R27)

The quote above places focus on the profile of an important, dynamic aspect of Greek people, its dynamism stemming from an unstable 'devotion' to the underlying socio-political motivation that accompanies the extension of solidarity. Crucially, the respondent speaks of a 'numbing' rather than a transformation or a resolution. The laudable mobilization did not therefore cultivate a deeper ethos of engaging with alterity, rather, fear never fully left the picture.

This notion of 'numbing' was diffused through the alignment of political and public discourses echoing an overwhelming message of solidarity. This message was potent, being expressed throughout the entirety of the State, its representatives and spokespersons, and its institutions. One respondent who worked in the Ministry of Migration as well as the Asylum Service describes how this 'benevolent conjuncture' (R41) was a crucial element of encouragement to discourses and actions that fostered solidarity:

> *"When the State, the prime minister, all the ministers, the directors of the police force, the judges speak to the suffering of the refugees and the overarching message is a message of sympathy, then the wider society follows suit."*(R41)

In the populist political scenery, ripe with disappointment and frustration towards the State and the devaluation of its institutions, the potency of this message could be questioned. A number of respondents (R22, R41, R42, R45), speaking from personal experience in politics, advocacy, journalism and academia, insisted that despite the legacy of distrust (heavily pertinent in the Greek context to the recent history of the financial instability) an overwhelming 'choir' of positive voices by State officials decidedly sets the tone:

> *"The devaluation of the political elites in Greece does not mean that those same political elites are not able to produce frames of political discourse; when the State communicates a message - and that is why I did not talk only about the government but*

*also about institutions of executive power and administration - then what can the people say?" (*R41)

Media and political discourse translated to new potentialities and dynamics of co-existence on the ground. One Pakistani migrant argues how:

"*as significant the wave of racism and violence was in 2011 and 2012, the wave of solidarity was even bigger… I saw people smiling to migrants on the streets and in the bus. I saw people willing to share their bread, give their clothes. And these people were many more that the racists"* (R36)

Without downplaying the optimism relayed in such a perspective, it is important to explore the negotiation processes that pervade the extending of (material) solidarity to refugees upon their arrival.

5.2.2 Profitable interactions

Material support to migrants and asylum seekers has been considerably discussed in recent years – especially in the terms of the intersections and tensions in the nexus between charity, humanitarianism, solidarity and their (non)political motivations and expressions (Cantat, 2018; Cantat & Feischmidt, 2019; Fassin, 2011; Feischmidt, & Zakariás, 2019; Karakayali, 2019; Mallki, 2015; Rozakou, 2016; Ticktin, 2014).

It is also valuable however, to focus on the material and immaterial 'profits' derived from the encounter with the arriving Others, as a dynamic that organizes the relationship between local populations and migrants (Siegel, 2019). Regarding material profit, many respondents noted the financial benefits that the influx of refugees, asylum seekers, NGOs, organizations, and volunteers brought to the Greek islands in the summer of 2015. A Lesvos resident notes how:

"locals in Lesvos have lost their yearly routine – the tourists, the charter flights coming during the summer. But the island used to be 'dead' during winter. Overall, the restaurant owners have profited because of the presence of NGOs with highly paid employees. The real estate profited – houses that would remain empty are now rented all year long" (R5)

Another respondent similarly remarked that in their frequent trips to Lesvos they always had trouble finding accommodation in hotels or apartments for rent, since many NGOs and

international organizations were renting multiple apartments for their employees; and seldom had to be hosted by friends in the island (R34). In the city centre of Athens, a similar situation could be observed:

> "*the owner of one kiosk in Victoria square was complaining about all the refugees. I kept reminding him of the daily turnover he was enjoying because of the refugees. So many new shops opened in the nearby streets. Yes of course there were issues, but the positive thing is that many people got a job because of this 'crisis'*" (R29)

The possibility for profit also encouraged incidents that attest to the substantiation of solidarity as a dynamic that is not only about help and empathy. A respondent from Lesvos notes how, alongside the dominant narrative of selfless support:

> *"some people saw the opportunity to profit or take advantage of the refugees. There were people selling bottles of water to refugees for 3 euros, asking 5 euros to charge a mobile phone or selling overprized food. There was also a specific tourist office in the hotspot that was selling tickets to refugees to travel from Lesvos to Athens"* (R5)

A spectrum of potential interactions indicates the liquidity of solidarity and counteracts any theorizations that attempt to ascribe pre-conceived meanings to any act of giving or glorify the selflessness and humanitarianism of the host society.

Regarding immaterial profit, the extension of solidarity towards the incoming populations offered the opportunity to construct a highly desirable public image. From the government's perspective, the narrative moved along the lines of "*Look! We, a country hit by austerity and by a humanitarian crisis, still manifest our solidarity to refugees*" (R9). This narrative was circulated both nationally and internationally. Solidarity to refugees represented a source of collective pride, a very particular 'patriotism of solidarity'. It also, however, resorts to essentialisms and familiar tropes of national narrative-building.

Namely, from the people's perspective, the extension of solidarity opened up new ways of being European at a time when Greeks' own Europeanness was questioned (Cabot, 2017). As such, the practice(s) of welcoming refugees consequently nourishes a self-attributed narrative of imagined Greekness as a culture of hospitality (Rozakou, 2016). One respondent interestingly connected the narrative of solidarity-as-hospitality to the narrative of Greece as '*έθνος ανάδελφο'* (brotherless nation) (R27). The phrase can be attributed to a former President of the Greek State back in the 1980s, and speaks volumes to the national memories, insecurities,

and the interweaving of Greekness with a history of hardship endured with pride and stoic dignity. The persistent linking of Greek compassion and generous spirit with the Syrians echoes and stems from the painful national experience of the uprooting of Greeks from Asia Minor in 1922. Stories of loss, suffering and absolute pauperization upon arrival in Greece still reverberate in the collective archive of memory. Commenting on the symbolic potency of narrative, one respondent argues that:

> "*The word 'refugee' activates the memories of the past – it has influence. That's exactly why the far right tried to attack and deny that 'identity' to the incoming populations"* (R39).

Brotherless, left in the intersection of crises, "*Greeks were willing to see simple people as heroes*" – because this narrative was aligned to their own past (R37). Following this dynamic, one could observe how human vulnerability is not assumed as a politics of injustice as framed in analyses of political solidarity, but as a politics of the (imagined) self – a formulation adjacent to that of Chouliaraki (2011) in her analysis on the ironic spectator. The 'banal' morality of ironic solidarity is characterized by a self-empowerment that shapes our reasons for action "as the realization of our own humanity while keeping the humanity of the sufferer outside the remit of our empathetic imagination" (Chouliaraki, 2011:369). However, Chouliaraki (2011) analyses the banality underlining the increasing instrumentalization of solidarity as self-centered consumerism in the global humanitarian market that perpetuates the existing power relations between the West and various vulnerable Others. I, on the other hand, question the 'ironic' part of solidarity, reading irony as convenience and complacence, whereby the Greek weaves an ethnocentric, gratuitous mythology in order to affirm the humanitarian reflexes of the imagined Greekness.

The argument here is that the notion of 'solidarity to refugees', in the Greek context, was predicated on an acceptance of the legitimacy of refugee-ness in political and public discourse. Beyond that, the organization of relations between the host society and the incoming population is more than an uncomplicated relationship of care, a manifestation of support, or a reaction to politics of injustice. It is more accurately considered a complicated and unsteady exchange with material and symbolic components.

5.3 Conditioning the extension of solidarity

As a fragile hypothesis that can ultimately be questioned, the notion of solidarity to refugees should be further unpacked. The 'uncomplicated' solidarity that calls only for the occasional (perhaps profitable) encounter with the refugee is substituted by the demands and responsibilities towards a migrant-Other that is no longer *arriving* but has *arrived*. Amidst this new situation the convenient umbrella of solidarity begins to shrink. The following section will explore the most significant conditions that cause the retreat of solidarity. The prolongation of 'crisis' is approached as a breach to the fleeting temporality of solidarity, leading to the introduction of further conditions that differentiate between deserving and undeserving migrants and further exacerbate fears of possible co-existence.

5.3.1 The pressure of prolongation

A growing uneasiness followed the EU-Turkey Joint Declaration which designated Greece as a country of destination rather than a transit country. Though an impatient desire to see that newcomers will be continuing their journey was manifest, it appeared increasingly unobtainable:

> "*In 2016, the EU-Turkey deal completely shifted the balance in the islands. We had an increasing number of attacks again human rights defenders in Kos, they were growing concerns about the consequences to the tourism industry in Lesvos…"* (R12)

The Declaration stood as a landmark, not only as an exemplification of 'exceptional' policy, but also as a trigger that exposed the inherent contingency of solidarity. One respondent from the Greek Asylum Service noted:

> *"This burst of humanitarianism and hospitality, as much as we need to 'honour' it, we also need to remind ourselves that it is complemented by a fortunate or unfortunate acknowledgement of limited responsibility… if these people came to stay this solidarity wouldn't have existed. At the same time, we should not reduce the solidarity displayed to a quid pro quo based on the belief that we are a transit country – it has a value of its own"* (R41)

This view connects the extension of solidarity with the concept of exception as comfort, bargain, and entrapment as explored in the previous chapter. The comfort of temporality serves to initiate an exploration of conditionality as an inherent aspect of the indeterminacy of solidarity. Solidarity was largely contingent on a crucial condition: the refugees' temporary

presence. The arrival of refugees, and the subsequent interaction and (material) exchanges with them was presumed to be a moment that would come to an end. The encounter was perceived as an event without a future, a story "not to be continued" (Bauman, 2000:95). The imperative of solidarity, for all its unifying potentiality, faced fragmentations.

Utilizing the Declaration as a considerable cause for these fragmentations can draw attention to how the temporalities of the refugee 'crisis' were pivotal in the extension of solidarity to newcomers, and even more crucial in the discontinuation of the same material and symbolic support. The passage of time and the modalities of waiting as a lived experience of migrants and asylum seekers has received increasing attention in the recent years (Jeffrey, 2010; Khosravi, 2017; Mains, 2012; Vidal & Musset, 2016). Shifting the analytical lens from the refugee population to the host society allows for the exploration of the unresolved prolongation of the refugee 'crisis' as the crucial element through which the intentions to support and offer (material) help to the refugee-as-Other lose their legitimation and value. The projected, undesirable scenario of permanence burdens this prolongation with an abundance of expectations, worries, and questions that cannot be answered. This trajectory is thus imbued with diverse affects as the anticipation, hope, and desire transform to doubt, anxiety, dread, and anger (Bandak & Janeja, 2018). One journalist describes the affective economies that arose throughout 2016 and 2017:

> *"the enforcement of the Declaration meant that whoever arrived in the Greek islands would remain trapped there. This led to inhumane conditions inside and outside of the camps with tensions stemming from the insecurity of those of awaited to be deported and the desperation of those who were just there for such a long period. The locals also felt frustration and entrapment for the way in which their islands turned into prisons – even those with pro-migrant attitudes could not accept the de facto detention of people under such horrible circumstances "* (R21)

The painful experience of prolongation is linked here to the experience of state power, as the array of negative feelings are amplified by the idleness of waiting and appear to be directly produced by the legal regimes handling of the 'crisis'. In this context, the retraction of benevolent solidarity can be as sudden, unforeseen, and volatile as a mood swing (Borneman & Ghassem-Fachandi, 2017; Cabot, 2017). A lawyer that worked in Lesvos following the Declaration remarks how:

> "*The feeling of defeat is quite tricky. Defeat can very quickly turn to xenophobia.*

Someone might be consciously helping (migrants) for years and then, for whatever reason, an unpleasant event can trigger hostility" (R4).

The overwhelming sense of disappointment and entrapment offered an 'anchor' to the shifts of mood. Unsteady as solidarity can be, its withdrawal – either instantaneous or gradual - is sparked by an event, a report on the daily news, an encounter with a refugee on the street or in public transportation. The feeling of defeat is also a temporal backdrop against which minute events can trigger hostile sentiment towards migrants. The disappointment of defeat grew with the passing of time and the lack of resolution to the migrant 'crisis', and as the imprudent cultivation of expectations that could not be fulfilled. Any expectations or hopes that were built in the early stages of the migration 'crisis' encountered a morbid consequence: by captivating people with dangerous illusions, one can only postpone the unforgiving eventuality where the unrealistic certainty of resolution meets the harsh refutation of said expectations. In the face of the sweeping changes brought about by migration policy changes, Greek society veered from apprehensive to angry. Consequently, lived experience and meanings of permanence undergo their own transformations. Whilst the crisis loses its meaning through its prolongation, so too does its permanence. As previously discussed, the notion of crisis presupposes a pre-existing normality that remains attainable – if only as a hope; hope that against the explicit political and policy developments around migration the crisis will sometime desist. This hope translates into a paradoxical and misguided optimism that permanence will somehow not be permanent, that the stranger has not come to stay but will keep on moving further and further away from us.

As the prolongation lies in a crucial temporal 'in-between', what is seen as temporary is what is feared as permanent. In the Greek vernacular, referring to an in-between situation that drags, without a definite resolution in sight, one would use the phrase "*η κατάσταση έχει χρονίσει*", referring to the process of time passing by in frustrating inaction and in a continued lack of determination. The verb is frequently invoked in media and political discourse as well as in informal discussions with friends and acquaintances. Discussing the consequences of unresolved prolongation in late 2018, one respondent notes how:

"*We are in a three-year long process of deflating [of solidarity] for a large part of people. There is no hope in the current policy and political framework – and no alternative framework… The rhetorical questions about the future acquire a new texture… when someone is completely disheartened and realizes that no change for the better is foreseeable"* (R38)

Prolongation here relates strongly to the notion of 'waiting' as manifestation of a sense of loss over a viable future. Waiting becomes experienced as a rupture between the expectations and the probabilities over what is to come (Jeffrey, 2010). This rupture imbues the 'now' with meaning. Against the will *not* to wait – against, that is, the will to experience resolution in the present, the annoying 'now' of 'crisis' refutes the possibility for change (Drangsland, 2020). Furthermore, it is possible here to juxtapose the quote above with the complacence of self-distance in the humanitarian endeavor. The unsettling uncertainty of prolongation seems to not only discourage the extension of solidarity but rather diminish the distance – literal and metaphorical – between the Greek and the refugee-as-Other. In this sense, the most crucial consequence of prolongation is how it 'fills' the figure of the Other with meaning. Prolongation sets a stage where the privilege of distance is obliterated and the pure intentions of moral self-fulfillment stumble upon a realization that the stranger that has come here, probably to stay, and will not just be grateful for the material gifts but shall also make claims: claims of space, of services, of rights and recognition. Similarly, as distance decreases, the imagination of the other departs from a romanticizing gaze towards the suffering subjects.

Finally, the temporality of prolongation also functions as a constant reminder of the mishandlings of the State in dealing with the crisis. And, as prolongation forces the fixing of our gaze towards the Other, so too does the Other become a constant reminder of said mishandlings. In that sense, the passing of time corrodes and delegitimizes, day by day, the overarching message of solidarity under a light of disappointment:

> *"There was a change from "oh the poor people in such unliveable conditions" to "they keep coming and they are now from all different countries and they will stay here because the EU will not take them - and eventually they will take us all out"… I mean you can call me an avid proponent of refugees but I understand that after years of giving food to asylum seekers, this cannot go on - grandmothers in Molivos have had enough of it. People are growing tired of a State policy that does not take the burden off the shoulders. Greek people showed initiative in helping but the emergency situation is becoming daily routine."* (R4) [52]

[52] The phrase used here roughly translates as 'they will take us all out' is idiomatic. Literally, the phrase means 'they will eat us as if we are cabbage' – and it is used in the Greek vernacular to showcase how one adversary can completely overpower their opponent. The use of the metaphor here is eloquent in that it highlights the sense of rivalry and polemical division between Us and Them, and because it panders to the narrative of flooding, of the endless numbers of (Muslim) migrants that will come here and procreate until the Others constitute the majority.

Ultimately, prolongation affirms the Other's odd existential place – close and far, indefinite, and indeterminate. The temporal peculiarities of spatial and existential de-stabilization have a crucial consequence: the only permanence they allude to is the permanence of urgency and crisis, as the fear for the permanent presence of refugees challenges and invites the contingent extension of solidarity. Therefore, the rupture of solidarity should be traced in its prolongation. The lack of resolution registers the passing of time as a reminder that the non-fixed figure of the Other – already undesirably oscillating between a frozen transience and an uncertain permanence increasingly edges towards the latter. The simultaneous uncertainty in three separate axes (existential, spatial, temporal) can offer no answers and, as such, crucially invites the retreat of solidarity.

5.4 Categories as hierarchies of deservedness

The destabilization of the migrant-Other in space and time initiated an uncertain process of categorical allocation regarding protection and support (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016; Holzberg *et al*., 2018; Ravn *et al*., 2020). Such allocations can be conceptualized as a time when the host society constructed harsher conditions for the extension of solidarity that the Other could not possibly satisfy. The process is considered uncertain as the available categories oscillate between the legitimate refugee that might still claim the continuation of his journey to the North and the (illegal) immigrant that has been effectively sentenced to stay (after the Declaration) unless he is deported (Papataxiarchis, 2016a; 2016b).

Such a process invested in the denial of inclusion into categories worthy of protection (either existing on new), or even countered the legitimacy of categories – not as an endeavor of critical deconstruction but of destructive, cynical skepticism. The quest for deservedness operates upon the hope that the deserving will not be found, and that he will not meet the criteria. In the case that he does the criteria might be altered; the threshold for inclusion raised even higher – in an effort to prohibit the migrant-Other from the legitimacy of his claim for recognition (either as legal protection or symbolic inclusion).

5.4.1 What separates the refugee from the immigrant?

> "It is early summer of 2018. A friend and past fellow student from Law School has invited me to her master program's graduation ceremony. The ceremony is held in the building of the faculty of law in downtown Athens – Acadimias Street. After the ceremony, a flock of

students with their parents and friends spread in the cafes and restaurants in the neighboring streets. I follow my friends to a café on Solonos street. Unlike the wide and spacious Acadimias Street, with all its historical buildings and big sidewalks, Solonos street is much narrower, filled with older buildings covered in soot, take-away cafes, photocopy shops, bakeries, and legal offices. In both streets, migrant presence is far from uncommon, but somehow in Solonos the presence is more prevalent, as if the lack of space in the pavements condenses the intake of visual cues, forcing the gaze to realize that the limited space is shared with many 'Others' – presumably more than before. The bus stop, in particular, situated right behind the Law school building and in front of a sequence of take away coffeeshops is constantly overcrowded. Many migrants take the buses that pass by - heading to Omonia Square, Kipseli or Victoria Square. We end up sitting right across said bus stop. The topic of my research is more or less known among the group so my friend's parents, upon ordering their drinks, are eager to ask me: 'So what do you think about the situation now?' pointing to the surroundings - where many migrants can be seen crossing the street, embarking the bus or just hanging around. "It is no longer a refugee issue, right? None of these men are refugees". I ask them why it would be a problem if they are not 'refugees'. "It is a problem because the country has absolutely no way of absorbing all of them. How can we withstand the arrival of 100.000 more immigrants?". "What are we supposed to do… take them in our own homes?" they complete each other sentence . The connection with the ongoing financial crisis is invoked repeatedly, as well as the rhetorical question "Are we supposed to take them in our homes"? Such everyday interactions – a common occurrence in my fieldwork – serve to highlight what is at stake in the division of newcomers to categories of deservingness. There is a simplicity in their verdicts: 'this is no longer a refugee issue', 'none of these men are refugees'." (Fieldnotes, June 18, 2018)

The convenience of simplicity ought to be countered by the complexity of nuance. In the following pages I will outline the criteria of the allocation to categories as yet another crucial condition of a shrinking solidarity.

The first, significant issue revolves around the (legal) differentiation between the refugee and the immigrant as a kind of 'legal deservingness'. The focus on this division is not a novel debate in the European and Greek contexts but has gained momentum as the refugee 'crisis' entered its second and third years. Given that, as underlined by most respondents, the

government of SYRIZA succeeded in inserting and legitimizing the category of 'refugee' in public and media discourse and everyday vernacular, the narratives of countering or reversing that process are worth exploring. In legal terms, the division between the refugee and the immigrant is distinct, with the former being defined as:

> "*someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion*"

and the latter as:

> "*any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is*". (UNHCR, 2021).

As has been stipulated, "conflating refugees and migrants can have serious consequences for the lives and safety of refugees. Blurring the two takes attention away from the specific legal protection's refugees require. It can *undermine public support* for refugees and the institution of asylum at a time when more refugees need such protection than ever before" (UNHCR, 2016).

In disentangling the complex debate around categories and the differences they entail, it is important to acknowledge that the umbrella term of migrants encompasses all individuals who cross the Greek borders. Included in this wide term are those who seek asylum and/or apply for (subsidiary) international protection, thus acquiring legal status contingent upon the granting or rejection of their application. The sharp dichotomization between the two figures extends far beyond the distinction between them in legal and policy texts. The categories become constitutive of political and popular narratives that build upon this distinction and bolster anti-immigration sentiment – thus becoming politicized and reflective of assumptions rather than realities on the ground. An increasing mismatch is observed, between normative frameworks that define the legal regime of protection and the realities of contemporary forms of migration (Zetter, 2015). Namely, in the seemingly veritable effort of UNHRC to underline the difference between migrants and refugees – for the sake of the protection of the latter – what is concealed is a 'categorical fetishism' (Apostolova, 2015) which persistently treats the aforementioned categories as if they simply exist – as if they are mere "empty vessels into

which people can be placed in some neutral ordering process" (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018:49). The consequences of such normative divisions are particularly prevalent in how nonchalant and unambiguous the verdict was in the vignette above: 'none of them are refugees'. When the legal framework itself is based on essentialist separations that are not subjected to challenge and reconceptualization, the very notion of 'refugee' or 'migrant' as it trickles down to the everyday parlance is devoid of any meaning – and even susceptible to weaponization by those who are trying to simplify the sorting criteria that delineate who remains outside of the remit of the moral and material imperative of protection. What remains unaddressed are the ways that categorical distinctions fail to grasp how individuals on the move might simultaneously fit more than one category or how their status and motivations can vary and change mid-trip (Collyer & de Haas, 2012; Koser & Martin, 2011; Malkki, 1995).

5.3.2 The Syrian as the (only) worthy refugee: Ramifications and paradoxes

The dichotomization between the figure of the refugee and the figure of the migrant becomes more prevalent as the prolongation of the 'crisis' weakened solidarity. Despite this deterioration, the figure of the Syrian largely maintained its notion of legitimacy.

An explanation of this favorable response should consider two interconnected aspects. The first is the cultural proximity between the Greek and the Syrian that has been prevalent since 2015. The Syrian is a familiar stranger, an Other that is less 'other'. The projected overlap between Syrians and Greeks is predicated on the closeness of lifestyle, phenotype, and appearance, consisting of a racial component. A respondent from civil society argues how:

> "*it is understandable that at any given moment or context, the incoming populations that bear more similarities to the host society – racial, ethnic, religious or cultural similarities - create less tensions*" (R43)

The religious closeness was of crucial significance for the Greek context too. A respondent from an anti-racist organization in Athens notes how:

> *"the Christian faith of Syrians had an impact in how Greek people saw them but it also fostered a system of categorization – a system that was already present in the policy framework*" (R12)

Salient here is how familiarity with the figure of the Syrian refugee simultaneously subjects those considered unfamiliar to a worse predicament. The persistence on cultural and religious

similarities sidelines any efforts to engage with other nationalities besides Syrian, and further hampers proper understandings of the prerequisites for applying for a refugee status. This dynamic was commented upon by multiple respondents:

> *"There was a great one-sidedness in the coverage of the Syrian [migration] - as a result, Greek people considered only the Syrian to be a refugee. If you speak of Iraqis or Afghans people ask 'why are they refugees? There is no war in their countries'"* (R9)

> "*We received donation boxes addressed specifically to 'Syrians'. I really believe that no one actually realized that anyone can be a refugee – even a Greek person. The European migration policy made things worse, with the resettlement and the quotas for relocation for specific nationalities. I mean, the exclusion of nationalities such as the Afghans from relocation was very problematic"* (R4)

The Afghan community was repeatedly invoked as the most damaged by the hierarchization of deservingness:

> "*The constant referring to 'Syrian refugees' coupled with the EU-Turkey declaration precluded any possibility of understanding why other migrants - especially Afghan migrants - are seeking asylum. Syrians were a new community, whereas Afghans have been here for years. They [Afghans] have consistently been subjected to violence – completely disregarded, exposed, homeless, not granted asylum status"* (R12)

> *"the Syrians have been designated as the 'elite' of the refugee populations – the others are 'leftovers' – but very few know that in Afghanistan there has been conflict for decades. People just remember the war between the Afghans and the Russians as if it is a thing of the past*" (R22)

Dissecting this erroneous image, a migrant from Afghanistan explained the severity of the danger that the Afghan people face:

> *"The people that flee Afghanistan mostly belong to the Hazara tribe. While they are historically the oldest tribe in the country, the Hazaras are a minority – meaning that they have no rights. They want to leave the country because they are constantly attacked or kidnapped by the Taliban, they cannot really walk the streets. The Taliban say that the other tribes have to go back to their countries but the Hazaras have to be buried in*

the ground" (R13)

It is difficult to view Afghan asylum seekers as failing to meet the prerequisites for refugee status – the fear of persecution described above appears to be well-founded. Fixation on the figure of the Syrian refugee however minimizes the space and time that can be afforded to considering the personalized accounts of other asylum seekers.

The second aspect relating to the deservingness of the Syrian refugee is connected to the conceptualization of the 'refugee of 2015'. The refugee arriving in the Greek islands prior to the EU Turkey Joint Declaration is a fleeting being and an ontological paradox. The country does not have to deal with him beyond providing safe passage. The legal modalities of the refugee as a subject of law are irrelevant here as they lie outside the remit of mutual rights and responsibilities that the State must address. Quite simply, in the initial months of the 'crisis' Greece saluted the refugee as a personification of hardships and a victim of war that are embarked on a long journey to the European North: an image and a trajectory of travel that most Greeks could relate too in from the historical past and challenging present. That is, Greek people partly recognize themselves in the Syrian Other. In the national context, the emic category of Syrian-as-refugee did not engage with the capacity of the (legal) category that revolves around the involuntary imperative of leaving the country of origin but was rather predicated in the lack of settlement in Greece as the country of transit. While seemingly benevolent, this conceptualization edges towards a problematic reduction of the refugee to a symbol of need – an essentialism that invites dehumanization.

It can be observed here how the indifference to (and lack of awareness of) the modalities and prerequisites of the refugee status is connected to what is already hinted above: a deployment of the argument about legal distinction that rarely aims at a neutral acknowledgement. It reveals a perilous arbitrariness and an ill-intentioned purposefulness (potentially operating in tandem, since they are not mutually exclusive) towards the setting of criteria on what constitutes the deserving figure. Indicatively, respondents with a legal background were explicitly clear on the mixed composition of the flows, especially after 2016 (UNHCR, 2017;2018;2019):[53]

"The flows are predominantly refugee, but nevertheless mixed. Exactly because the use of 'refugee' is so widespread and misused, people do not realize that 'refugee' is a

[53] For a comprehensive layout of the numbers and demographics of arrivals, see https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/62023 (2017), https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/68529 (2018), and https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/74670 (2019).

*generic term. Legally, you are either seeking asylum or you have been granted refugee status. But that is of little significance for most Greeks." (*R9)

The eventual insignificance of the legal categorizations were underlined by a lawyer working in an NGO in Lesvos who noted:

"*There is ignorance over basic legal provisions – even within solidarians. They are all migrants, so they are all welcome. For the majority of people, of course, you see the opposite: they are all foreigners, so they are all not welcome. In both cases, there is this 'all'. Nobody ponders the importance of the legal status and how it reflects each newcomers' journey and background*" (R11)

This propensity to generalize, especially when considering all newcomers to be unwelcome immigrants, neutralizes the State's burden of taking responsibility for a humane, respectful treatment of migratory populations. Moving from the interpersonal and the meso-level solidarity to an exploration of State solidarity (Lahusen & Grasso, 2018), it is important to trace the SYRIZA government's efforts to justify the reversal of handling the migration flows – from capitalizing on a welcoming culture to the enforcing of the deterrence-oriented EU-Turkey Declaration. The then Minister of Migration (Ioannis Mouzalas) even announced that 80 percent of those passing through the Greek islands were not refugees but male economic immigrants, a claim not reflected in data but rather used to justify the agenda of deterrence and further instigate anti-migrant suspicion (Liberal, 2017). One journalist underlined how:

"*in the police statistics we were receiving, the Syrians were the predominant flow throughout 2017 – and Syrian families for that matter*" (R21).

An NGO worker from Lesvos further observed how after the EU-Turkey Declaration, the 'refugee issue' became the 'migration-refugee issue', with 'migration' being added to minimize the moral, legal, and material responsibilities that accompany the response the influx of refugees (R11). Such denial of responsibility is mirrored by the willful ignorance over the facts and figures of the incoming populations which is in turn reflected by the selective exercise of solidarity. This combination exacerbates the dehumanizing trend that lurks in processes of partial inclusion to deservingness and further corrodes the openness to the Other from both directions. On the one hand, the choice to selectively name a fragment of the incoming populations as 'refugees' constitutes a direct affront to the humanity of the migrant-Other. On the other hand, even the solidarian/leftist narrative that supported an equal treatment of

refugees and immigrants by equating the groups as 'humans on the move' and 'humans in need' (R15) might have eventually facilitated a non-benevolent equation, one that sought to degrade the rights of refugees to the minute level of protection reserved for economic immigrants. The obsession with differentiating the 'good' Syrians refugees from the suspicious economic immigrants is guided by the discursive binary of worthy vs. unworthy – therefore stripping all migrants of their individually specific journey and alarmingly encourages a biopolitical control over the deserving or non-deserving body.

The following quotations of a parliamentarian from the main right-wing political party in Greece underline how the rationalization of (un)deservingness narratives are cloaked seemingly 'neutral' voices that insist on highlighting the differences between populations:

> *"The first thing we need to do is separate the migration issue from the refugee issue – and see how the State can best differentiate between the two. The treatment of the refugee and the immigrant is different – their legal status is different"*
>
> *"Our migration policy must be based on the differentiation between the immigrant and the refugee. I think this realization is not widespread enough in the Greek society. I am not saying the immigrants should not have any rights, but their legal status quo differs from the refugees'"*
>
> *"So, refugees must be placed in open hospitality centers and immigrants in detention centers, while the process of re-admission to their country of origin is pending. You cannot do that to refugees because their country is a warzone, their life is in danger. That is the crucial difference, I am not saying we should respect the immigrants less – all nations reserve a different treatment between the two groups"* (R23)

This argumentation reflects the provisions of legal texts regarding the division between the two categories, and was employed by the respondent as logical, humane, and nothing-but-fair. This employment is problematic in several ways. First, in its struggle for maintaining neutrality, it showcases the confusion over the very same legal terms it invokes – namely between refugee and asylum seeker. The actual definition of a refugee speaks of well-founded fear of persecution – and is not limited to conflict zones. Furthermore, while this argumentation evangelizes a respect to the rights of those who are not worthy of protection, it remains silent on the content and the meaning of this respect. Through the cracks of a discourse that rationalizes the ramifications of categorization the main message is clear: the migrant is to be

detained and sent away, while the asylum seeker can stay in a dedicated center that constitutes a material reminder of the benevolence of the host and underlines the wishful thinking of temporariness.[54] It is important to note here how the decisive criteria of deservedness, though mentioned repeatedly, begins to fade in the background of the essentialist division. The asylum seeker, in the convenient vagueness of a legal distinction, is a human in need, and the economic migrant that also crossed the borders is not afforded the same sympathy.

The urgency of differentiation thus reveals its paternalistic roots and modus operandi; the 'where are you from?' question is not aimed at understanding the predicament of the mobile individual but is directed towards the determination of the country of origin, largely utilized to discern the deserving from the non-deserving despite it being a poor indicator for the personalized fear of persecution (Khosravi, 2020). Further still, the essentializing of the category of 'refugee' as the negative of 'economic immigrant' bears some peculiar consequences. Sketched as a worthy figure as long as they keep moving, the refugee is reduced to a symbol, an ideal subject of preconceived but arbitrary meaning (Carastathis & Tsilimpounidi, 2018; De Genova, 2013). By singling out the 'refugee' the category itself becomes an empty signifier. If the economic immigrant, as a subject that cross borders in the need of a better future, is vehemently denied the humanity of the traveler in need, then what humanity does the refugee retain? If the human on the move is demonized as unworthy and undeserving, what respect can be extended to the refugee as worthy and deserving? If the deserving refugee is the one that shall not stay for long and the undeserving immigrant is the one that should have not come, then there is no presence of the migrant-Other that is considered acceptable. Following this logic, both the categories of the refugee and the economic immigrant are just different descriptions of the same figure: the figure of the wasted human (Bauman, 2004; 2007). The allocation to categories is then nothing but a futile attempt to keep the Other away, to guard the distinction between the 'inside' and the 'outside'. Taking the expectations of deservingness to the extreme results in the rather paradoxical conception that the worthy refugee is the one that never came. In this conception, the recognition of the Other as a worthy refugee us both associated and conditional upon of his arrival. In an overtly necropolitical fashion, the death of the asylum seeker would fulfil the criteria of deservedness whilst their life

[54] It is noteworthy that a few months after this interview took place and in anticipation of the 2019 national elections, political parties announced their agendas on issues of national importance – including, of course, migration. The plan of New Democracy, the party to which the respondent belongs did not include any open hospitality centers. It rather promised the establishing of "*closed* temporary first reception and hospitality centers, where within six weeks, the asylum application process will be completed, both in the first and second degree." (my emphasis). See the full text of the party's agenda at https://nd.gr/ekloges-2019/synora-metanasteutiko

signifies a lack of credibility (Khosravi, 2020). A respondent employs the narrative of the Syrian-as-defector to explain this paradox:

> *"An interesting division is that between the defector and the non-defector. The Syrians are, according to most, refugees. According to this, the category of 'worthy' is limited to the Syrians who flee the war. But some would even say that he should stay and fight, that it is not acceptable to abandon your country when it is at war."* R11

The changeability of categories of deservingness highlights the thin, fragile foundations upon which the migrant-as-other ontology is balanced. Considering the delicate balance that is traced in the discursive choice between 'refugee' and 'economic immigrant', when determining openness or hostility within the Greek society, the proliferation of the narrative according to which most newcomers are 'immigrants' constitutes a gradual relapse in the solidarity sentiments. The designation of the 'refugee' as a legitimate and widespread discourse underlines how the regression to 'economic immigrant' carries a deliberate effort to categorize and depreciate the welcoming gesture that preceded. It viciously predicates migrancy as a choice worthy of suspicion and hostility. The economic immigrant becomes a synonym of illegality, a sans-papiers figure of deviance "as if the papers are falling from the skies, as if the complexity of bureaucratic procedures, the impossibility of inclusion and the choice of 'people considered undesirable' are a given and not the result of a specific, narrow-minded policy" (Stergiou, 2019: n.p.). [55] There exist various posts on social media regarding the dire conditions in the reception and identification centers, and how the infrastructure of the Moria 2.0 was even worse than that of its predecessor, and how vulnerable those residing in the camps were to the heavy winter that was looming (Reliefweb, 2020). In the comment section, the sedimentation of categorization was evident. The distinguishing of worthiness had worked profoundly, in that the people being exposed to such dire conditions came second to the need to underscore that it is *not* refugees that are in danger but immigrants who illegally crossed the borders, as if the cross bordering was 'more' legal when attempted in 2015 compared to a few years later. The categories have once again superseded the humanity of the subjects, there is no threshold of protection recognized for the illegal immigrant anymore. The category of 'illegal immigrant' has been legitimized as 'matter out of place'.

[55] In her opinion piece, Stergiou (2019) also considers the 'asylum seeker' as a legalistic term that becomes less threatening by focusing on the bureaucratic process it entails rather than the subject it refers to - thus facilitating the indifference to establish a meaningful encounter with the Other.

5.3.3 Demographics of the undeserving

A further condition to solidarity that pertains to the categories of deservedness centers on the changing demographics and the respective volumes of unwanted migration flows. The popular myth about the undeserving economic immigrants that are 'flooding' the country has been persistently accompanied in Greek current affairs by a constant call for the changing nature of human flows (Papastergiou & Takou, 2019: 20). The assertive entry of the 'refugee' discourse was profoundly connected to the mediation of the 'crisis', the circulation of images of families and children coming out of boats, and the shock-inducing virality of photographs of dead bodies on the Aegean Sea and the Greek and Turkish shores (epitomized in the frame of Alan Kurdi's lifeless body). But, as a respondent from UNHCR notes:

> "*It is one thing to see mother with children – you do not feel threatened, and another to see older men with dark faces. Seeing a boat filled with families is different than seeing a boat of 50 Pakistanis*" (R9)

The narrative invoked here is one of the most pervasive following 2016, perpetuated by the media and reverberating in everyday discussions as an argument of the radical right and a diffused leitmotif amongst conservative voices. Here, the element of essentialization, in racial, gender and age terms, can be viewed as an uninformed persistence on delineating the demographics of the flows. Whilst the racist undertones area clear in this narrative, an exploration of the functionality of the intersectional subjects' arbitrary delineation to a more or less acceptable figure of the traveler is worthwhile.

This process does not only respond to a fear of the Other but also reveals a level of practical assessment. There is certainly a preoccupation with the color of the newcomer, but color is not just a metonymy of race but also a prevalent metaphor of 'difference within difference', becoming an "instrument of a new objectification of differences, which is not finite but infinite" (Balibar, 2005:28). Whilst Balibar (2005) sees in this preoccupation the dynamics of Otherness' commodification in the neoliberal market, it is to be argued here that the functional aspect of differentiating is a tool that attempts the distinguishing of several Others, in gradual order of deservedness. This deservedness is diminishing, bordering non-existent for certain populations that are considered only as economic immigrants or not at all. Furthermore, intersecting at race and gender, the figure of the middle Eastern man utilizes the long-standing narrative of the deviant migrant. NGO workers who were in Lesvos in the period of the EU-Turkey Deal had the opportunity to witness alterations in migrant flows and the subsequent

reactions of the local society:

> *"The composition of the flows changed – inevitably. In 2015 there were many Syrian families. When the Declaration was signed, Turkey received significant funds to create an infrastructure that effectively deterred migrants from crossing the borders. Those who kept coming belonged to a different demographic. The people in the island were used to seeing parents with their babies arriving, not single male migrants under the age of 30. However Sudanese, Somalians or Eritreans also have very high recognition rates. But try convincing a local that these people are also qualifying for refugee status"(R4)*

> *"There is a strong bias against Sub-Saharan Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh… For Pakistanis and Bangladeshis there is a widespread belief that they come only for economic reasons – whereas the Sub-Saharan Africans are something completely foreign, there was never any real discussion about the reasons that make them seek for asylum here" (R11)*

The perception of a grave change in demographics is however countered by actual statistics of the flows and the numbers of granted applications for asylum or subsidiary international protection. For example, in 2016, 47 percent of the arrivals were from Syria, 24 percent from Afghanistan and 15 percent from Iraq (Reliefweb, 2016). The numbers were fairly similar for 2017, while it is noteworthy that 59 percent of arrivals from that year were women and children (Reliefweb, 2017). Even in 2019, when the Syrians no longer represent the dominant demographic, coming second to Afghanis and with Iraqis coming third, the refugee or subsidiary protection rates for all three countries remaining consistently high (AIDA, 2021). Pakistan and Bangladesh are in the top 10 countries of origin of applicants but their numbers combined represent a minor percentage of the overall number of entrants.[56]

As regards the sub-Saharan countries, the lack of visibility and discussion for the long-standing political upheaval and turmoil in several African countries was underlined by several respondents (R11, R12, R41). Again, the statistics here show how countries such as Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan are included in the list of countries with highest rates of recognition (HRMMA, 2020). The following quote demonstrates the emptiness present in the obsession

[56] It is interesting however that relevant data often showcase discrepancies, sometimes significant, depending on the source (for example between the Asylum Service and the UNHRC). A respondent (R9) has even commented that in the first year of the refugee 'crisis' the deviation was in the thousands.

with categories and demographics:

> "*In the bus, who knows if one is an asylum seeker or an immigrant? No one knows, the brown young man must go – the family can stay"* (R25*).*

It is not only the lack of meaning that is crucial here. It is also the paradox of physical proximity with the Other – leading only to a pre-conceived recognition of differing modes of Otherness. There is an economy of desire at work (Ahmed, 2000), a desire to 'tell the difference' as an apparatus of knowledge intended to place Others in a certain place. This economy operates on the assumption that difference can be traced in the signs that Others bear on their body and on their skin, signs that irrevocably reveal difference.

In this section, the complex process of categorizing deservingness was explored. It was argued that a pre-occupation with the division between the worthy and the unworthy migrant as either Syrian refugee and economic/illegal immigrant, or a fixation on the changing demographics of arrivals, serves as a condition that justifies the diminishing of the support towards incoming populations. Given that the legal or symbolic category of 'refugee' remains unclear, the categorization based on 'refugee-ness' is either futile (if it resides in misinformation) or damaging (if it stems from an intentional effort to minimize the moral and material responsibility to migrants). The demand to know where an asylum seeker comes from does not seek an answer of geographical pertinence or personal history, but functions as a constant reminder that foreignness itself can never be omitted and categorization-as exclusion is constantly at play (Khosravi, 2020).

5.4 Legitimizing the fears of proximity

Both proximity *to* and co-existence *with* the migrant-Other are potent conditions to solidarity. Considering the possibility of co-existence, efforts to legitimize an array of fears that can be framed as 'fears of proximity' are observed. These fears imbue solidarity with skepticism and deal a blow to humanitarian sentiments, functioning as a culmination of the contingency and ambivalence between solidarity and hostility. In other words, they serve to introduce further conditions that question the ramifications of openness to refugees, amplifying suspicion and weakening the ethics of material and symbolic support. The crucial element in these fears is their appointment as sensible and legitimate, balancing between rationality and rationalization as an inevitable path of ascribing the migrant Other as a problem unresolved. On the one hand,

these narratives assert a questionable benevolence, by operating on behalf of 'both our own good and theirs'. On the other, they largely reflect the inefficiencies of the State in its capacity to handle the new realities of the 'refugee crisis', and the structural weaknesses both enable and strengthen the perceived sensibility of the worries. They differ from the neo-racist incompatibility discourse (discussed in the following chapter) in that they are presented as valid concerns fueled by the unanswerable question of prolongation and the persistently uncertain scenario of permanence. In this sense, their justification holds on to a self-appointed 'prudence' that attempts to refute irrationality. Carefully read, they can be revealed as displacements of a fear that lies beneath and purports to be both logical and well-founded.

A noteworthy manifestation of these worries that highlights the foregrounding of 'sensibility' is the unrest that accompanied the enrollment of refugee children in primary and secondary schools. In connection to the exploration of the country's shortcomings in handling the 'crisis', the conditions of proximity are deemed worrisome exactly because the asylum seekers' "*distribution is a huge issue. If half of the class in my child's school was consisting of refugee children I would be troubled too – not because they are foreigners, of course, but because I would start think that the level of the group would decrease"* (R9). The impossibility of integration or inclusion is thus predicated on the State's inability to efficiently regulate distribution across the administrative districts (especially in the urban areas of Athens and Thessaloniki), and objections to that inefficiency further hinder integration. What is pivotal here is how the figure of children, and more importantly the Greek children', as a symbol of vulnerability that inspires the need for protection (and, quite literally, the symbol of the future), becomes the conduit and filter of unrest. In the name of the children that every worry is legitimate, and every suspicion is justified.

The perils of co-existence readily combine the potential disruptions to school with the familiar trope of the Other as a dangerous entity of impurity and a public health hazard. The perception – and, consequently, exclusion - of the Other as dirty and polluted has been previously explored in the study of human interaction – from Douglas' (1966) analysis on purity and Kristeva's (1982) essay on abjection. But the aim here is to pinpoint the utilization of such a narrative, not as a response of irrational disgust but one of reasonable concern. There is a substantiation for this concern, an argumentation that comes to envelop the risk of co-existence as restless parents argue that "they say yes to the education of refugee and migrant children, but not in the schools of our district", not only because of the cultural gap but "mainly because of the conditions of hygiene and cleanliness" of refugee children that render them ticking bombs healthcare-wise

(Lymperaki, 2016). Such utterances echo the political discourse of right-wing politicians that raise in Parliament "the threat to the health of those entering [the country], and subsequently to public health, [being] evident and significant" (Papastergiou & Takou, 2019:51). However, there is no reliable evidence that children of newcomers pose any actual health hazard, rather, the opposite is true. A former left-wing parliamentarian noted:

> "*in citizen council meetings I had observed two groups of people: the covert Golden Dawn supporters who were 'playing the part' of the concerned parent but also the parents who were genuinely worried and eager to know whether the refugee children coming to school were vaccinated. Actually, the vast majority of the refugee children were vaccinated as if they were 6 months old*" (R34)

As another respondent argues, parenthood was closely linked with these worries and is employed as a further legitimation of concern (R11). This is why the 'worried parent' figure was utilized, well before the refugee 'crisis', by (far) right actors in capitalizing on the pre-existing narrative of dirty, unhygienic migrants that represent a constantly looming healthcare hazard (R21). However, the health of migrants arriving to Greece since 2015 was significantly put at risk due the living conditions at most of the reception centers and the camps. As one journalist argues:

> "*Obviously someone living in a camp cannot maintain a level of hygiene compared to someone living in an apartment. The doctors that deal with migrant populations have told us that migrants are a generally healthy population. Their health deteriorates when they are held for a long time in the Greek camps under dire conditions."* (R21)

Most diagnoses concerned respiratory infections, gastrointestinal disorders, and skin conditions – linked, as commonly agreed, to overcrowding and generally poor living conditions (Papastergiou & Takou, 2019). The asylum seekers were, therefore, not a peril to public health but *at peril* – rendered vulnerable by a European and national policy of detention and deterrence in the border regime. Furthermore, what should be underlined is how the poor living conditions in the RICs and camps are deliberately perpetuated and utilized to bolster the healthcare hazard narratives and act as a deterrence strategy. One respondent from an international organization remarked that:

> "*The mayor of Kos had removed the public toilets from the island during the tourist season. Inevitably the migrants were urinating everywhere. We asked the mayor to*

> *bring back the toilets – not only for medical and healthcare reasons but also in terms of respect to human decency. We even offered to cover the cleaning costs but the mayor refused because, as he said, if the toilets were there, more migrants would come to the island"* (R32)

A final narrative of the refugee 'crisis' resides in a peculiar area of implicit suspicion against the possibility of co-existence with the migrant-Other, and one that focuses on the detrimental role of the smugglers. A journalist with long experience in the debates around migration intriguingly stipulates:

> *"…a new set of myths has been cultivated, also by EU institutions, where the target seems to be the smuggler. Essentially, the target is still the asylum seekers, because if there were no smugglers, no asylum seeker could arrive – every legal path or route is effectively closed… We witness a xenophobia that is ashamed of itself, so it attempts to find new arguments that do not bear the 'seal' of xenophobic ideology but are, whatsoever, conducive to the same goal. A new form of phobia that hides revolves around the potentially inhumane character of border crossing. When Avramopoulos [the then European Commissioner for Migration] talks of the 'dangerous boats of smugglers' they have to intercept, these same boats used to be the 'refugee boats' in 2015"* (R15)

The malicious figure of the smuggler is channeled as a medium through which the collective 'We' keeps the Other at a distance, precluding the need for communication and mutual commitment (Bauman, 2000). This distance is of moral character precisely because the smuggler narrative confines the Other within the ontological realm of the victim. The friction with the dangerous and criminal ontology of the smuggler is however interpreted as a process in which the Other acquires for himself this same ontology, thus becoming suspended between agentless victim and co-conspirator to the crime of crossing the border. Moral superiority demands that the host society clarifies its distance in a double-sided manner. First, by sympathizing with the refugees that are, in the collective imagination, taken advantage of by shady, malevolent criminals; and second, by foregrounding this narrative as a valid concern against the arrivals of refugees. In both cases, the boats must stop arriving. This is the epitome of the 'sensibility' discussed. Distance is maintained from the Other in a passive manner by abiding to arguments of the troubled and concerned spectator. In closing this section a short story from the field serves to demonstrate the fears of proximity and their corollaries:

"It is late afternoon, and I am in the Metro station of the Omonia Square. Two different lines intersect at Omonia, so the station is busy and buzzing at any time of the day. I am standing next to the ticket machines when I notice an older woman, around 65, slowly coming up the stairs. Contrary to most commuters, she does not seem to be in any kind of a hurry. I decide to approach her and introduce myself. I tell her I am a student and I just want to ask some questions about her everyday experience with commuting and how she feels when she has to share the train with migrants. She is happy to participate. In her opinion, most migrants are filthy, they have no sense of hygiene, at least their sense of hygiene is highly different than that of Greeks. As she assures me, she feels very confident about the truth of her claim. "*I'm telling you because I know – I was working for the Social Security Office for 30 years. I had to deal with them every day. At some point I tested positive for Hep B antibodies. I am sure that one of them infected me. You know, we had no protective glass. And we had to come in contact with all of them: Pakistanis, Sri Lankans and so on*". She tells me that many of her friends never sit or touch anything in the train, and if they do they profusely wash their hands and clothes as soon as they go back home – but she considers herself less militant. Still, she is adamant that migrants are a public health hazard. "It is not only that they stink, but they never pay for a ticket - you know that, right?" she rhetorically asks. "*Immigrants don't care for the quality of the public means of transportation, they haven't paid for it through taxes, like we have. They do not respect the space, they throw their trash on the ground*". She keeps calling migrant 'lathrometanastes' and 'lathroepivates' [free riders]. The etymology of illegality is ever-present. The notion of 'lathrepivatis' would rarely be used for a Greek, even though freeriding is presumably as popular among Greeks too. I ask her if she would use the same word for a Greek, but she dismisses the question. The migrants' illegal and criminal ontology is extended to cover every aspect of their daily, social life. They cannot escape their illegal status even when their actions are in no way different that those of the Greeks**.** After concluding our short discussion, I politely thank her for answering my questions and excuse myself. I am heading towards the platforms when I hear her calling my name once again. She comes towards me, just slightly leans toward me, and adds almost in whisper: 'don't get me wrong, I am not a racist'." (Fieldnotes January 30, 2019)

The legitimation of fear is evident. This phrase can be recognized across many cultures and languages as a lait motif, preluding or following a racist utterance. It is essentially an admission of racism that searches (with varying degrees of audacity, desperation, or shame) for absolution over its intention. 'Don't get me wrong, I'm not racist' is a sideways attempt to convince oneself that the person in front of them shares their view, that they legitimize and partake in the fear expressed. A comforting agreeability is expected, an agreeability that would serve to normalize the opinion and somehow make the speaker less culpable for the discursive act of othering.[57]

Ultimately, through the purported legitimation of the fears and worries of proximity and co-existence, an aversion to the migrant is systematically substantiated as a defensive movement away from the Other – an Other that more essentialized. Defending or worrying about something – about personal hygiene, about public health, about children – readily becomes the justification that transforms solidarity to hostility. At the same time, the sensibility it invokes accommodates and flatters the self-image.

5.5 Concluding remarks

Across this chapter, the manifold configurations of solidarity – including its demise – were explored. It was argued that solidarity is most aptly explored as a negotiation, as a point in a continuum that delineates the relations between the Self and the Other. In this sense, the extension of solidarity is prone to abrupt change and sudden discontinuation and is therefore indistinct and inherently connected to its opposites: fear, retraction and hostility. Being a principle that potentially organizes and conditions the interactions between the host society and the incoming migrants, solidarity tends to shape its subjects – the one extending and the one receiving the gifts of solidarity – and, more importantly, it shapes and pervades the literal and symbolic distance between the subjects. Abiding by this understanding, the wave of solidarity that was observed in Greece in 2015 was analyzed as an opportunity to move towards exchange with the migrant-Other. However, this opportunity was both fleeting and fragile since the reduction of distance between the Self and the Other meets an important obstacle. If the migrant-Other is ontologized as that which is outside the Self, then the movement towards the Other is constantly questioning its trajectory. If the Other is recognized as the opposite of the Self, then where does this trajectory eventually lead to?

[57] This short story is based on observations of a short ethnographic study conducted in the framework of a PhD workshop in Athens in January 2019.

The impossibility of answering these questions invites the introduction of conditions to the extension of solidarity. The prolongation of the refugee 'crisis' was one of these crucial conditions. Solidarity stumbled upon a scenario of permanence that exposed the contingency of its extension – a temporal rupture of the movement described. Following the temporal aspect, another condition was the insistence on dividing the incoming populations into categories of the deserving refugee and the undeserving immigrant. The categories and demographics of deservingness diminished the horizontality of solidarity and framed its support as being selectively appropriate for certain individuals. Further, the third condition of solidarity was predicated upon an attempt to legitimize the fears and risks that co-existence with the Other allegedly carries. Ultimately, the movement towards the Other is completely reversed: it is now a movement away from the approaching Other – with this approach giving birth to fears that relate to the present and project to an uncertain future. The following chapter departs from this reversal in order to critically explore the narratives of nativism that purport to substantiate the distance and incompatibility between the host society and the migrant-Other.

Chapter 6

Nativist dichotomies

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the complexities involved in outlining the fluid figure of the Other in the refugee 'crisis'. It was shown how the Other transforms from a figure in need, to whom we extend sympathy and solidarity, to a figure of suspicion, one of spatial and temporal instability that invites anxious projections of an uncertain future. As the encounter with the Other can no longer be regarded as recent, conditional solidarity has shifted to divisive nativism and is paralleled by a discourse that seeks, exacerbates and capitalizes upon the divisiveness between the Greek and the Other.

The discussion that follows will analyze and contextualize the recurring myths and discussions that outline and accentuate the nativist dichotomies and xenophobic manifestations as made evident throughout the Greek social landscape.[58] These discussions generally revolve around three key clusters of issues occurring within the Greek context. The first is the process of debasing solidarity through a framework of popular distrust towards political elites and the pro-refugee political discourse that SYRIZA promoted (at least until the EU-Turkey Joint Declaration), as well as highlighting the 'change of tune' on SYRIZA's part as further evidence of the unreliability of the political establishment. The second is the issue of welfare provisions to refugees and asylum seekers as a proverbial 'red flag' that triggers hostile tendencies towards the 'undeserving' Other, at a time when many Greek families face adversity and pauperization. The third and final issue reflects on the narratives that are employed to showcase, beyond doubt, that the culture of the migrant-Other is a threat to the imagined values and ideals of Greek society and culture. Such narratives include the myth of migrant criminality as well as the growing trend of islamophobia. The analytical discussion of this chapter corresponds – roughly but not exclusively – to the period between the summer of 2015 and the change of government in 2019, which included both the summer of migration and the infamous Greek referendum.

[58] Even though the approach taken here predominantly uses the concepts of 'nativism' or 'cultural racism', it is important to note that 'xenophobia' was very frequently invoked by respondents to denote anti-immigration and anti-foreign attitudes or narratives (Hervik, 2015). Especially compared to the more academic term of 'nativism', xenophobia is a very popular(ized) term in the Greek vernacular and is employed as an umbrella term that covers notions of discrimination, hate speech, racism etc.

6.2 Aspects of nativism

As indicated above, this section will attempt to group the narratives, arguments, and justifications of the three main discourses that substantiate the three respective axes of nativist dichotomies as they are observed in the Greek context. However, it must be remarked that these lines of division strongly intersect, relate, and overlap with each other to the point that it is often impossible, and perhaps counter-intuitive to neatly separate them. The first two discourses can be seen to revolve around the "*competition for scarce resources and the access to the already degraded welfare infrastructures of the country*" along with the (far)right conspiracy theory about "*traitor politicians that facilitate the degeneration of the country with the influx of migrants and refugees*" (R39). The third discourse, operating as the 'wild card' to be summoned at any moment as a bottom-line, self-proven and beyond doubt in its essentialism, focuses on the rigidity of cultural lines that separate the Greek from the non-Greek Other.

6.2.1 The Others-within

The prolonged temporal and spatial instability engendered by the stretching of the refugee 'crisis' dealt a substantial blow to initial responses of solidarity. A principal component of nativist dichotomies engages with the designation of *internal* Others - those considered traitors, whose words or deeds ostensibly espouse notions of multiculturalism or cosmopolitanism (Guia, 2016; Kesic & Duyvendak 2019).[59] In the Greek context, those prescribed as traitors for their pro-migrant rhetoric and humanitarian (solitarian) action were the representatives of the SYRIZA government. These primarily included individuals who maintained pivotal positions such as the Minister or Secretary of Asylum and Migration Policy, as well as the defenders of migrants' rights and employers of NGOs or international organizations. An exploration of the targeted animosity towards such internal Others is a crucial step in understanding the construction of the migrant-as-Other as it justifies the complete delegitimization of solidarity. In other words, the path to justifying the hostility towards the external Other must also attack, undermine, and deconstruct the validity of any claim in favor of openness towards the external

[59] It should be clarified here that migrants and asylum seekers are also internal Others, as they are spatially inside the border. My division between the internal (the Other-within) and the external Other (the migrant-Other) is predicated on the criterion of native-ness (Greekness) rather than geography.

Other. It must disperse even the faintest notion of merit in any political or public discourse that calls to acknowledge the necessity or benefit of co-existence with the Other.

6.2.1.1 A Declaration and a Referendum

There can be considered two crucial political events that typify the loss of trust towards the political elite and the confirmation of public suspicions over governmental inability to protect the interests of its citizens against external enemies. The first is the notorious EU-Turkey Joint Declaration and the discontent it generated amongst Greek people as a critical moment of symbolic, political, and administrative defeat – particularly for those regions most affected by the 'crisis'. One respondent from the Asylum Service notes the fickle balance created upon the signing of the Declaration as an exceptional condition, a condition that limited the rage and frustration against the State more than against the refugees – an affective process he labelled as 'subterranean racism':

> "*Even in the islands that saw incidents of racist violence from early on – like in Chios or Samos or Kos, I still do not believe that the racist violence is the biggest issue. What comes first is a massive 'fuck you' towards the political authorities – and in that 'fuck you' racism is incubated"* (R41)

Similarly, one respondent from the municipality of Athens underlined that the handling of the refugee crisis was utilized by the SYRIZA government as one of the last 'embankments' of its proclaimed ideals. Inevitably, the failure to manage the crisis in a way that did not victimize the country caused intense feelings of betrayal. Assessing the situation as it evolved from 2015 to 2018, a respondent from the Municipality of Athens argued that:

> "*there is an effort to contain this feeling, but it is becoming increasingly harder because what is starting to become apparent is that there was a deliberate use of these people [the refugees] in their time of need, for political gain"* (R22)

The proliferation of such affective economies is, however, far from novel. Discussing the narratives focusing on the States failure to protect the nation, another respondent observed how:

> "*it is not just a sense of betrayal. In this pivotal moment, it feels like people are picking up the thread of the absolute distrust– a thread the Greeks never really let go of. This is a widespread distrust to the political institutions, a distrust from society to society itself… There were indeed many reasons to feel distrustful after 2015 and this dynamic*

favors the Golden Dawn narrative which targeted all its political adversaries based on how all of them are unreliable traitors." (R37)

Once again here, the proverbial 'legacy' of the far-right has an important role in propagating and strengthening populist utterances – harvesting the anger to substantiate the legitimacy of the 'traitor' rhetoric. As one respondent noted, the 'traitors-scum-politicians' slogan was dominant amidst the extremist block of Greek society, a block that resolutely rejected democratic parliamentarism (R21). The ramifications of the normalization of such views held further significance for the interweaving of the populist surge with the refugee 'crisis':

> *"[The refugee crisis] indirectly functioned as a source for rekindling insecurity towards the government. Up until a certain moment, SYRIZA could argue that previous governments betrayed the people while they represented a new, unspoiled Left leadership, doing things that no one dared to do before. Ultimately, it was this leftist government that turned their 'no' into a 'yes' – the same as anyone that came before them." (R37)*

This development was conveniently utilized in the rhetoric of the opposition. In early 2018, a respondent from the New Democracy party was eager to note how:

> "*given that we are also in prolonged state of economic crisis with high levels of unemployment, there is a very intense sense of insecurity and the fact that the government has amended the policy on migration numerous times – especially during 2015, has made the Greek people to a large extend justifiably disbelieving on whether all the actions undertaken to deal with the migration-refugee issue are actually to their benefit… What we see in 2015 was a horrific discrepancy between what SYRIZA said and what they did."* (R23)

The accusation of the government's inability to keep its promises brings us to the second political event which crucially affected the public debate about internal and external Others, though it did transpire prior to the EU-Turkey Declaration at a time when sentimental solidarity was potent. The notion of turning an initial 'No' to an eventual 'Yes' refers to the politically turbulent days before and after the Greek referendum that was announced by Prime Minister Tsipras in late June 2015. After failed attempts to renegotiate the austerity measures with the European partners, Tsipras called the people to vote whether they accept the bailout conditions as laid down by the Troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the

International Monetary Fund).[60] While the question itself appeared simple the situation was not – as it brought with it heavy political connotations. As has been argued, this referendum was unique in the fact that, for a significant part of the people the ultimate ramification of the vote went beyond the question asked. In other words, "*there were clear indications that what was at stake was membership in the Eurozone and possibly in the EU in general*" (Xezonakis & Hartmann, 2020:364). When more than 60% of the voters voted against the agreement - spurning the scenario of further austerity, these connotations became clearer as the Prime Minister heralded the 'No' vote as proof that "democracy cannot be blackmailed; Greece has made a brave choice and one which will change the debate in Europe" (Guardian, 2015). A few days after these grandiose statements however, the Greek government signed the very same Memorandum of Agreement they had protested against - despite the explicit manifestation of popular dissent, with the Prime Minister comparing the negotiations to a war in which battles are fought and lost (BBC, 2015). The political upheaval that ensued led to the resignation of the government and the announcement of a new round of national elections. Despite the SYRIZA party finishing first in the election results, there was little doubt that any trust placed in the anti-Memorandum profile of the party had evaporated – rendering SYRIZA indistinguishable from any of its political counterparts (Carastathis, 2018).[61]

I wish to draw here a tentative connection between the two aforementioned political events and the preceding analysis of how technologies of governmentality pervaded the refugee 'crisis' and created unclear scenery regarding the appointment of responsibility for the country's victimized position. Against a dysnomic backdrop of sovereign struggles that simultaneously diffuse and accentuate the targets of populist anger and blame placing, the migrant-Other is left as the most vulnerable and suitable target for aggravated hostility and exasperation:

> *"All these events [surrounding the refugee crisis] coincided with a specific moment in time when political elites in the country are thoroughly devalued, when a crisis of trust towards the ability of the political establishment to find solutions is transpiring. This*

[60] The referendum question was phrased as follows: "Should the agreement plan submitted by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund to the Eurogroup of 25 June 2015, and comprised of two parts which make up their joint proposal, be accepted? The first document is titled "Reforms For The Completion Of The Current Program And Beyond" and the second "Preliminary Debt Sustainability Analysis." Interestingly, in the layout of the page the 'No' answer was placed above the 'Yes' answer. See https://www.tanea.gr/2015/06/29/greece/ayto-einai-to-psifodeltio-toy-dimopsifismatos-tis-5is-ioylioy/

[61] For an analysis on the left-wing anti-memorandum populism as showcased in the history of the SYRIZA party see Stavrakakis & Katsampekis (2014) and Stavrakakis *et al*. (2017).

intensifies the anger – without necessarily making it more pronounced towards the refugees. The anger is diffused, it is in a constant boiling point…" (R41)

The proximity of and to the migrant-Other, both literally and symbolically (Ahmed, 2000; Bauman 2000, 2004) provides an immediate target for the consequences of this 'boiling' contempt. The expression of this negative effect does not necessarily diminish the anger towards the treacherous political elite but instead re-directs and disperses it. I do not argue that this was the first instance when the proliferation and diffusion of (populist) anger has been instrumentalized to frame migration as the most imminent problem of the Greek society. As one respondent noted:

"The 'role' of the migration and refugee issue had been very specific in the past years. Whenever a political scandal was erupting, suddenly there was news about a pushback in the Aegean Sea, or a shipwreck with refugees, or an alleged increase in migrant arrivals. Those of us who had experience on the field could easily see the pattern. Migration has been instrumentalized like that for a long time. In 2015 it [the refugee crisis] was instrumentalized to such a degree because the situation itself was indeed quite dire. But the anger over how the SYRIZA government dealt with the refugee 'crisis' is not only because of SYRIZA's campaign on open borders but also because of its campaign against austerity. When the latter collapsed, the former was targeted too" (R4)

I wish to underline here the workings of this diffusion because it demonstrates how existing dynamics of distrust and resentment between the Greek public and political elite deeply influenced the way in which the pro-migrant SYRIZA discourse was received as another political agenda that was unequivocally injurious for the interests of the Greek people – and, thus, rejected as a whole. As such, the interactions and demarcations between the three groups (the Greek people, the political elites as internal Others, the migrants as external Others) become increasingly indiscernible.[62] As opposed to making any clear distinctions, I argue that the complexity and potency of anti-migrant tendencies makes it impossible to reduce them to one-dimensional interactions of in/out, in relation to the up/down interactions of *the people vs. the elite* as they are triggered and fed by each other. The counterbalancing, or lack thereof, is

[62] Populist (radical) right literature argues that the natives are pitted against migrants, the rights of whom the political elite seems to support in detriment of the interests of the native (Mudde, 2007; De Cleen, 2017). However, a separation has been observed that sees the division between the people and the political elites operating on a vertical axis while the exclusionary tendencies of the natives towards the migrants operates horizontally (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017).

neither horizontal nor vertical manner but rather haphazard, taking turns and deviations to reach the desirable goal: the designation of a chain of Others – from the internal to the external.

My main point here is that the two major political losses of the SYRIZA government – the one on the migration policy realm and the other on the economic policy realm – became thoroughly intertangled in the designation of the government as unable to protect the people and engendered an affective dispersal of anger towards both the internal and the external Others in the Greek context.

6.2.1.2 'Take them to your homes'

During the collapse of public trust in the government, the political opposition and the respective right-leaning press and media capitalized on the deconstruction of "SYRIZA's left-wing profile (R15). In breaking down the key moments and events throughout the refugee 'crisis' and, crucially, the framing of such moments within media discourse, one respondent recounts how:

> *"The reports against the SYRIZA officials who were explicitly supporting migrants' rights were constant. A key moment of 2015 coincides with the incumbency of Tasia Christodoulopoulou as a deputy minister of Migration Policy. Christodoulopoulou endured frequent criticism with strong sexist connotations – with a number of reporters from 'Kathimerini' who oscillated towards the (far)right side of the ideology spectrum started using the nick-name 'kira-Tasia' with a clearly sexist tone. Christodoulopoulou became the first deputy minister of Migration – before 2015 migration was not a central point in SYRIZA's agenda. One of the main items on the agenda was how to mark a swift from previous policies that heavily relied on detention and how to put an end to the operation of detention centers."* (R15) [63] [64]

The explicitly pro-migrant stance espoused by Christodoulopoulou was weaponized against her, in a process that started from a pointed media discourse attempting to discredit her for her gender, age, and appearance and that was inevitably replicated and reproduced throughout public discourse. In a now infamous quote from the spring of 2015, made just before the spike in numbers of asylum seekers from Minor Asia to the Greek islands, Christodoulopoulou tried

[63] 'Kira Tasia', roughly translated as 'madame Tasia', uses the abridgement 'kira' instead of 'kiria' (Mrs.) which in the Greek language is primarily used as a synecdoche to refer ironically to the figure of a middle-aged unintelligent woman. As such, it is used to belittle and ridicule Christodoulopoulou herself and attack the politics she was defending.

[64] As indicated in the methodology chapter 'Kathimerini' is a right-wing newspaper with nationwide circulation.

to appease the anti-migrant worries and promote the anti-detention agenda by claiming how the migrants were becoming visible in the center of Athens as "refugees that are just soaking up some sun during the morning" (Georgiopoulou, 2015)

Following an acknowledgment of the problematic system of lengthy, inhumane detention for vulnerable populations, the decision was made to drastically change the status quo on detention, primarily by reducing the upper limit of the detention period from over 18 months to 6 and immediately releasing vulnerable detainees. This was put into effect by Christodopoulou and the then Minister for Citizen Protection (Giannis Panousis), after the death of two detainees in Amygdaleza detention center in early 2015 (Kathimerini, 2015).[65] Being one of the first important decisions that demonstrated the pro-migrant rights stance of SYRIZA, and effectively mobilizing the release of approximately 7500 detainees that were overpopulating Greek detention centers (R15), this development drew heavy backlash for Christodoulopoulou and also laid the foundations for one of the most popular anti-migrant narratives emerging even before the EU-Turkey Declaration signaled the end of the era of Greece as a temporary transit country. Already during the summer of 2015, a common refrain of the (far)right was the urge to anyone expressing a pro-migrant discourse to "take them into your homes"- 'them' being the asylum seekers arriving to the islands and passing through the capital of Athens when travelling to the northern borders. Discussing the challenging situation that was unfolding at that time, a respondent from the Greek Forum of Migrants (which has its offices next to the famous Victoria square) admits how:

> *"it was a big miss of the state and the organizations not taking advantage of the philanthropic sentiment in the beginning to undertake some actions in order to help the people on the square. I mean, I can understand someone living in one of the buildings around Victoria complaining - because 40 asylum seekers are squatting right outside the entrance of his apartment building and they take a piss next to the door."* (R29)

Such images of negligence justified the narrative of filthy migrants polluting the public space and empowered the slogan "take refugees into your homes" from a very early moment of the 'crisis'.[66] Often targeting SYRIZA politicians specifically, the slogan reads as a critical

[65] It should be noted however that the Amygdaleza camp never really closed down during the years of SYRIZA government – despite the controversy around the events discussed here, see https://www.iefimerida.gr/news/258106/moyzalas-i-amygdaleza-oyte-ekleise-oyte-tha-kleisei-pote

[66] Important to note is that the slogan did not originate with the onset of the refugee 'crisis' as it was already a common leit-motif in political and public discourse from 2014, see for example https://www.avgi.gr/politiki/97154_na-toys-parete-spiti-sas

accusation or a punishment. On the one hand, it characterizes a demand for the political elite to undertake the financial burden of supporting migrants with their own income, by undertaking, through their material contribution, their own political responsibility. On the other, beyond a manifestation of distrust, it is also mobilizes a complete reversal of hospitality; there is no longer a 'we' in the equation, only a resolute 'you'- referring to the politicians and the migrant defenders – who should deal with the unwanted guest, and who should co-exist with the unclean, contaminating Other not just in the urban scenery but in the familiar space of a neighborhood or in the sacred space symbolized in the 'home'. Nativism becomes intertwined with sexism and homophobia in this scenario, corroborating the observation that "racism and sexism function together and in particular, racism always presupposes sexism" (Balibar, 1991: 49). The slogan is imbued with variations such as "take them in and cook meals for them" or "take them in and we'll see what they do to your daughters" or "take them in so that they fuck you in the ass every night, faggots" - the migrant-Other is again presented as inherently (sexually) violent, barbaric, and deviant, while the Other-within is framed as betraying their Greekness for accepting the danger and contamination in their home. For those who might not oppose the idea of actually "taking them to their homes", the slogan includes its own failsafe: taking them to their homes is the ultimate testament to the designation of the Other-within. The Others-within – namely the traitors who are 'sanctioned' with the proximity to the migrant-Other – attest, beyond doubt, to their otherness (and subsequently their non-Greekness) if they do indeed 'take them'. Through this narrative any pro-migrant and anti-xenophobic opinion or stance was gradually equated with being anti-Greek – a simplistic conflation that only deepened the division between the native and the migrant-Other.[67]

In this subsection, it was argued that since the early moments of the refugee 'crisis', the SYRIZA agenda against detention was framed as a decisive factor in the proliferation of migrant presence – and consequently, the deterioration of urban space, prompting the (far)right argument for those considered responsible for this deterioration to take the migrants to their home.

[67] Interestingly, in early 2020 a member of the European Parliament affiliated with the SYRIZA party was chastised for owning a number of flats which were actually rented to the ESTIA program for housing asylum seekers. see 'Ti apanta o Dimitris Papadimoulis gia tin ekmisthosi akiniton tou se prosfyges' [What does Dimitris Papadimoulis answer for the rental of his real estate to refugees]. (2020, May 18). Ethnos. Retrieved from https://www.ethnos.gr/politiki/106168_ti-apanta-o-dimitris-papadimoylis-gia-tin-ekmisthosi-akiniton-toy-se-prosfyges

6.2.2 Who made Greece a 'fenceless vineyard' for migrant-Others?

By the early months of 2016, the popular dissatisfaction with the perceived betrayal of the SYRIZA government over both the financial and the refugee 'crises' was growing, and the pro-migrant stance of the party was becoming increasingly relativized. One respondent attempted to delineate the backpedaling from the initial stance of unconditional humanitarianism as was reflected in the interaction between media and public discourses:

> "*There was a change of the general political paradigm away from a pro-refugee approach and a need to implement the European policies of deterrence and deportation, so we could observe explicit efforts of several SYRIZA officials to target the NGOs and solidarity organizations and groups that opposed said policies. As a result, the part of the people that were supporting refugees' rights saw the inability of SYRIZA to serve their initial ideological position towards the issue of migration. For the part of people that was already right-leaning and xenophobic, the perception of SYRIZA as unable to handle the situation was exacerbated while the crucial point was that they were the ones that opened the borders. The bottom-line was that SYRIZA stopped the pushbacks and effectively sent a message of welcoming rather than deterrence. Media articles at the time were maintaining that three million refugees are in the Turkish shores ready to cross the sea borders and it is SYRIZA that brought us to this situation"* (R15)

The accusation of making Greece a 'fenceless vineyard' (an inflammatory phrase used since the first waves of Balkan immigration towards Greece in the 1990s to conjure up imagery of imminent invasion) spearheaded the arguments of SYRIZAs opposition. In an interview with a parliamentarian from the New Democracy party (the governing party before January 2015 and after July 2019), he credited the government of 2015 for causing a new wave of migrant influx towards Greece – and, consequently, Europe:

> *"The most troubling issue was - and is - the issue of securing our sea and land borders… If I remember correctly, the number of arrests of migrants who illegally entered the country in 2014 was about 80.000 and in 2015 this number was more 900.000. This increase does not correspond with the international developments – the war in Syria had started much earlier. So something changed in the meantime, and what changed unfortunately is the manner in which this issue was handled. Namely, the prime minister urged people to cross the borders, the deputy minister of migration was*

> *saying that migrants are enjoying the sun, the detention centers were shut down and as a result the detainees started their journey towards the European north but at the same time they informed their own people back in their home countries that Greece's borders are open, they let us free – so you should come too"* (R23)

Critical to note is how, besides the explicit appointment of political responsibility to SYRIZA, the anti-migrant agenda of the right is subtly present in the associated discourse of border protection. The inhumane conditions of the Greek detention centers that had received numerous convictions from international and European courts are barely touched upon. The opening of these centers was instead presented as an unfortunate event that led to the new wave of migration. The (necro)politics of detention are conveniently left outside the argument and through this omission the legal type of detention, which are administrative and not penal, are subsequently obfuscated. Such obfuscation is further supported by the statement 'arrests of migrants who illegally' crossed the border, as yet another traditional argument of the right that disregards the fact that individuals entitled to asylum are not 'illegal', rather what is illegal is for these individuals to be detained (Papastergiou & Takou, 2014:24-27). What should be further emphasized is that this kind of dehumanization takes place when the focus is intentionally placed on the opening of borders. Besides the spurious belief that borders can actually be hermetically close (which disregards both the spatial and geographical realities of border permeability as well as the ingenuity and agency of those wishing to cross them), the obsession with the danger of open borders deliberately deprives the individuals crossing them of their humanity. The migrant-Others crossing the sea are therefore not recognized as individuals; their 'faces' are deliberately opaque, they are a faceless danger, an ominous presence, a lurking shadow at the border. Such dehumanization invests in and capitalizes upon the populist division. The opposition. and, generally any (far) right voice, attempts to strengthen the division between the government and the people by talking of borders and invasion, and the human element, the versatility and variety of predicaments that constitute each individual story and journey of a human on the move is at best essentialized, and at worst completely silenced.

Finally, as already alluded to, in the list of those perceived as accountable for opening the country to the migrant 'invasion' are the members of NGOs and international organizations– all those that have been labelled under the umbrella term of 'human rights defenders'. A

politically involved respondent from the island of Lesvos attempted to describe what he considered a dominant narrative regarding the presence and role of NGOs in the island:

> *"After the Joint Declaration, people started wondering what is going to happen because they had not realized that geographical confinement was part of the deal. So while in the beginning there was a great co-operation with certain international NGOs, the residents started getting frustrated: they could see NGOs operating with huge funds and they were blaming them for the new reality [of the EU-Turkey Deal]. Even I cannot at the moment completely preclude the possibility that the big NGOs have some responsibility over the restriction of migrants in Lesvos. I mean they, the people of the NGOs, want migrants to be restricted here – it is, as you understand, a situation that sustains them. At this moment, I believe that the biggest industry, the biggest 'business' if we may use such terms, is the business of handling the 'crisis', so the NGOs profit from migrants staying."* (R5)

The frustration steadily grew through 2017 and 2018 to the point that one respondent from an NGO argued that the targeting of human rights' defenders' had become so explicit and pronounced that an NGO worker – whether or not they were in the field, vocal in social media or just maintained an office job – could be legitimately worried for their wellbeing (R27). By 2019, the targeting had transformed into an alarming trend, warranting special mention in the annual report of the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) where it was stated that during 2019 and early 2020 numerous incidents of violent attacks occurred against employees in refugee support organizations throughout the Aegean islands. Furthermore, "the first findings of these attacks show that the perpetrators are not individuals, but they work and attack in groups, which confirms RVRN's strong concern about the aggravation of the type and frequency of attacks" (RVRN Annual Report, 2019:19)

This section argued that the trajectory by which the SYRIZA government officials were designated as Others-within was built around the interweaving of two key political moments (the Greek Referendum of 2015 and the EU-Turkey Declaration) which were framed as victimizing political losses for the country, allegedly proving that if the government cannot protect its citizens from austerity, then it also cannot protect them from the migrant 'invasion' – and vice versa. Those who supported the opening of migrant detention centers and the shift to an open border policy – and thus espoused a pro-migrant stance – were gradually framed as willing to share a literal and metaphorical space with migrants; a willingness that rendered

them as traitors to their Greekness. Those traitors were credited for turning Greece into a fenceless vineyard – an imagery invoked to amplify the panic over unprotected borders that that also cultivates a subterranean dehumanization of the migrant-Others as a threatening figure that seeks to permeate the border that separates him from the native.

6.3 The red flag of benefits and welfare provisions

The debate around welfare provisions to asylum seekers and refugees after 2016 revolved around the following: benefits in the form of cash assistance, the provision of accommodation, and free access to healthcare. Since 2017 cash assistance has been delivered through the Greece Cash Alliance (GCA), a group of NGOs partnered with and led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and funded by the European Commission (EC) in cooperation with the Greek Ministry of Migration Policy.[68] The cash assistance scheme was aimed at restoring dignity and empowering asylum-seekers and refugees to freely choose how to cover their basic needs.[69] It was also expected to directly contribute to the economy of the host community through the purchase of services and goods. In May 2018 around 23.000 households (amounting to approximately 50.000 individuals) received cash assistance ranging from 90 to 550 euros – reaching a total of almost 5 million euros, with eligibility being assessed on the basis of date of entry in the country, legal status and present location.[70] By December 2018, the numbers had risen with about 30.000 households and 63.000 individuals receiving assistance. A similar housing scheme involved the co-operation of the UNHCR, the Greek Government, and various NGOs co-funded by the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union, with the aim of providing urban accommodation through the ESTIA (Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation) program. Equally optimistic in its scope, the ESTIA program hoped to provide "a normal daily life for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece", to facilitate "their access to services, including education" and streamline the "eventual integration for those who will remain in the country", whilst evangelizing the benefits to be gained for the host society by "embracing diversity through peaceful coexistence as well as the renting of their apartments".[71] In December 2018 close to 5 thousand units (apartments) with a capacity to accommodate just over 27.000 individuals were at a 98%

[68] See https://help.unhcr.org/greece/living-in-greece/access-to-cash-assistance/
[69] See http://estia.unhcr.gr/en/greece-cash-assistance-december-2018/
[70] See https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/unhcr-greece-cash-assistance-may-2018
[71] See http://estia.unhcr.gr/en/home/

capacity.[72] Finally, regarding healthcare, it was generally purported that "every refugee and asylum seeker in Greece has the right to freely access primary, secondary and tertiary health care" [73].

With this brief description of fact and figures in tow, the following section will outline how the issuance of various welfare provisions to migrants and asylum seekers, as material manifestations of priority over the 'native', presents as a limit of solidarity and humanitarianism as an unbearable comparison between the two groups. The debate around these benefits boils down to one fundamental element: it is almost unimaginable that the migrant should find themselves in any context or occasion, in a better position than the native Greek.

6.3.1 "We respect the rights of migrants more than those of Greeks"

The familiar myth of the job-stealing immigrant, prevalent throughout Greek society during the 1990s, 2000's, and the first half of the 2010's (Baldwin-Edwards, 2001, 2004; Kiprianos, *et al.*, 2003; Papastergiou & Takou, 2014) deviated and diversified after 2015. A respondent with considerable experience in researching the national and European far right ideology, discourse and politics argues:

> *"an argument of the far-right has long been that migrants deprive the natives of welfare resources. In the scenery of the European far-right, during the years of Jean Marie Le Pen in France, someone had to have worked for years in order to have insurance coverage. So the issue of money goes beyond the matter of jobs, it is also about the social benefits. There is a growing narrative here in Greece of illegal immigrants with fake papers that drain the resources of the welfare state"* (R37)

Important to remember is that any discussion on welfare provisions in Greece is predicated on a widespread belief that migrants are a (financial) burden to the country – a view supported by a strong majority of the population, with more than 70% of Greeks agreeing that migration has a negative economic impact on the country – a percentage almost identical in two public opinions polls conducted in 2016 and 2019.[74] In order to understand the texture of such results,

[72] See http://estia.unhcr.gr/en/greece-accommodation-update-december-2018/
[73] See https://help.unhcr.org/greece/living-in-greece/access-to-healthcare/
[74] For the 2016 poll, see https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/07/11/negative-views-of-minorities-refugees-common-in-eu/. For the 2019 poll https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/03/14/around-the-world-more-say-immigrants-are-a-strength-than-a-burden/ . Notably in both cases, only 1 in 10 Greeks asked believed that the country can be made stronger by the presence, labor capacity and talents of migrants.

one should return to early 2017 (when it refers to the analysis of the events surrounding the refugee 'crisis'), when the then Minister of Migration Policy, Ioannis Mouzalas, declared that asylum seekers would start receiving a cash benefit instead of free meals alongside the plan to start moving migrants from camps to apartments – under a wider initiative on behalf of the Greek State to resume a number of responsibilities and activities at that time carried out by UNHRC and IOM (Protothema, 2017). For a refugee family that cash benefit was predicted to be one euro less than the minimum guaranteed income for a Greek family 'for symbolic reasons' (Kathimerini 2017). Whatever the sentiment behind this formulation, it was unfortunate in sketching an explicit comparison between the Greek and the migrant-Other, a comparison where the prioritization of the Greek is symbolically and materially minute. Beyond the manner of formulation, the content of this declaration also warrants scrutiny. Principally, the fact that the funds used were created and allocated by the European Union to aid refugees and were therefore not coming from the State's budget. This funding was therefore never intended for Greek citizens, but the rationality of such argumentation did not bear much importance. A lawyer who worked both in a prominent NGO both in Lesvos and Athens explains:

> "*Yes, the emergency funding is channeled for the purpose of coping with a humanitarian crisis. But let me ask you a question. The financial crisis that Greece experienced, with people losing their homes, with the deaths of homeless people, with the rise in suicide rates… think of the sheer number of outstanding loans, all the families that are almost being thrown out in the streets, why is this not considered a humanitarian crisis, why does it not fulfil the criteria for humanitarian support? I am playing with the words here, acting like the devil's advocate – I am fully aware what DG ECHO is and what is its mission. But a Greek citizen is paying lots of money on taxes. Well, not all of them… anyway taxation is sky-high and what an employee takes home after direct or indirect taxes and deductions and insurance contributions is up to 60-70% less than the already low salary. So if a Greek citizen can barely get by, shouldn't he be eligible for financial aid?"* [75] (R4)

This lingering question has become more and more explicit in a manner inversely proportional to the exhaustion of solidarity. And it is upon this question that the co-existence with the Other

[75] DH ECHO is the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. Its proclaimed mission is "to preserve lives, prevent and alleviate human suffering and safeguard the integrity and dignity of populations affected by natural disasters and man-made crises." https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/humanitarian-aid-and-civil-protection_en

becomes critical – in a similar sense to a chemical reaction approaching a critical stage. A respondent working in the Migrant and Refugee Affairs office of the municipality of Athens tried to explain the sensitive balance of communicating the issue of benefits to his constituents:

> *"The question 'why do you do so many things for them and not for us?' is not an easy one to answer. We tell the citizens that the very reason we can do things for you is because we have refugees, because we get money for the refugees, because we consider social coherence an important part of our political agenda… You have to spend some time in order to explain the citizens that we try to do things for their neighborhood that will benefit everyone.. Housing programs for migrants were always rather chaotic and people here are justifiably upset due to this lack of planning. And now they are upset because more and more are coming – which is not really true, but the bottom-line is that the framing of the discussion has to change"* (R22).

The provision of accommodation was added as an extra layer upon the already sensitive matter of cash assistance and benefits. A respondent from the UNHRC who also resides in Athens remarked how in the vicinity of her own house, there were at least 4 apartments hosting asylum seekers under the ESTIA program. The increased visibility constituted a challenge and a worry of the municipality of Athens especially when it came to the sixth municipal district of the city – which remains the most overburdened with migrant population (R9). However realistically challenging the issue of visibility, the mere existence of the ESTIA program and the knowledge that migrants were enjoying free accommodation would be enough to initiate the same vehement pattern of comparison. The dichotomy is clear: the deserving, poverty and crisis-afflicted Greek citizen that is genuinely in need of support is cast aside in favor of the undeserving, lazy Other who enjoys the privileges they have been gifted:

> *"A refugee that has been recognized as such is entitled to all constitutional and social rights – he is completely equal to a native. I should not be saying this – in the sense that it might come off as an anti-migrant position while this is not what I mean, but did you know that the accommodation schemes are extended beyond the moment of refugee status recognition? A refugee has, indeed, no place to stay and no resources. So the schemes are now extended after the recognition – I think they mentioned a period of 6 months. Maybe they will extend it even more later on. This has not been widely publicized and thank God it hasn't because it would really cause an uproar.*

What kind of equality to the Greek citizen is this then? I mean of course you cannot throw refugee families on the street – the extension is justified and it makes perfect sense. A refugee has no support network here." (R4) [76]

Under these circumstances, "*people do not care at all whether the funding comes from the EU or the Greek State''* (R37). Moreover, the provision of benefits was conducive to the growing feelings of envy and jealousy (R37). Such envy encouraged bitterness and cynicism as the process of comparison between the two groups substantiated the figure of the native not only as the one being victimized in comparison to the foreigner, but also as the one ridiculed by the discrepancy that exists between his predicament and the privileges that the migrant-Other allegedly enjoys. In this sense, it further fueled the trope of the ungrateful, lazy migrant that is financial burden upon the country. The envy was also accompanied by anger and outrage, particularly regarding comparisons made around the housing scheme. Worth noting is how, during the financial crisis in Greece, the issue of foreclosures (and subsequent public auctions) of homes due to outstanding loan debt had caused much controversy and contested debate. Comparisons between the predicament of the native and the non-native were therefore inevitably drawn. As another respondent concluded:

"any discussion on the provision of accommodate to refugees happens in tandem with the discussion about banks foreclosing and auctioning homes. It is impossible to disentangle the two: the knowledge that you might lose your own home while the migrant is given a home" (R38)

Beyond the cash assistance and the accommodation schemes, the third 'thorn' of welfare revolves around the free access to healthcare. The nativist narrative moves along similar lines:

"I *have been told by people that they try to book an appointment at the doctor or they are at the emergency room of a hospital and the five patients that came before me plus the five patients that came after them were foreigners. Whether they were refugees or*

[76] In a UNHRC report on the outcome of the cash assistance and the accommodation schemes published in May 2018, it was stipulated that "once asylum seekers become recognized refugees (a process that currently takes over six months), they are eligible for assistance under the ESTIA programme for a grace period of six months only. In the absence of an agreed handover process to the GoG [Government of Greece] and integration strategy with the SSI [Social Security Initiative], there is no clarity in relation to how long ESTIA beneficiaries will continue to be assisted. As explained by some UNHCR respondents, discussions between UNHCR and the GoG suggested that an agreement was being reached (as of December 2017) to extend the grace period for 12 months as a temporary measure while the development of the exit strategy remained ongoing" (UNHCR, 2018:9).

immigrants is not significant here. The problem is that the Greek is burdened with insurance contributions and the foreigner is not." (R9)

The realization of the native being in a worse situation in respect to all of the welfare provisions described above consequently translates to a generalized belief that there is a different – even preferential - administrative treatment towards the migrants (R4), that, in one way or another, "*we have come to a point where the rights of refugees and asylum seekers are more respected than the rights of the Greeks*" (R4). Whilst this statement could be perceived as initially innocuous - as a call to the importance of respecting everybody's rights equally, the history of the country regarding the treatment of migrants indicates that the reverse scenario would not necessarily cause similar anger. A variation of the statement frequently invoked is that the Greeks have become "migrants in their own country", an inversion of positions uncovering the implicit inequality that is expected to characterize the dynamic between the native and the foreigner. Another variation would be articulated as "not only migrants, but also Greeks" – again the comparison is set to demonstrate how dire the circumstances are for those profoundly victimized by austerity and crises, and to draw sympathetic attention back to the native Greek citizen (Carastathis, 2015; Dalakoglou, 2013):

"*the international organizations and NGOs that came after 2015 were asking why a refugee in need of medical care was not transferred within minutes to the nearest hospital while the national healthcare system was crumbling down and Greek people were also not receiving the treatment they needed. They [the organizations and NGOs] had no idea what was happening in the country, so they were pouring money on local societies but at the same time they were playing the 'humanitarian card' and preaching to the locals – people who were deeply affected by the financial crisis. Ultimately, this situation was detrimental to the refugees. As if it was not enough that Greek citizens carried all the complexes of the financial crisis, all the stigmatization and the 'racism' they endured, they had the NGOs who only cared about saving refugees*" (R12)

Whilst the above quotation is describing a controversial but prevalent approach amongst NGO's working in the field, particularly in the Greek islands, it also alludes to a problematic narrative that has gained momentum in the past years; the multifaceted victimization experienced by the Greek people providing a backdrop against which the notion of 'racism' acquires new meanings. Racism transforms into a reaction against what is perceived to be deeply unfair, unintelligible, and unacceptable. It is employed when describing what the native

has to endure, obscuring the meaning of the word and ultimately trivializing it. Furthermore, the provision of welfare to non-natives is substantiated as 'racism' against contemporary Greeks through a juxtaposition between the 'privileged' position of migrants in comparison to the difficulties that Greek emigrants experienced in the (recent) past. However, this notion of a 'privileged' position does not correspond to the everyday life of the migrants but rather describes how the migrant-Other is sketched in the imagination of the native. As a representative of a migrant community argues:

> "*The reality of the situation is that an asylum seeker that just came and does not know the Greek language gets 100 euros per month. How many Greeks live on 100 euros per month?"* (R13)

Somewhat paradoxical then, is this insistence on the lesser position that an immigrant is almost demanded to expect. The experience of Greek immigrants is not utilized to cultivate an understanding of the challenging predicament of migratory subjects at large, but rather as proof that whatever hardships and injustices a migrant may experience come as an inescapable element of migration and should be accepted without protest. The focus is on placing as much distance as possible between the self – portrayed in the collective imaginary as hard working, patient, resilient and dignified – and the migrant-Other – as idle and unworthy.

6.3.2 Disentangling the crises

In situating the events in the wider Greek sociopolitical context, a lawyer working in one of the most prominent NGOs in Greece long before the eruption of the 'crisis' describes how:

> "*In 2014 and 2015, the argument about the job-stealing immigrants was not that common. Someone repeating it would be perceived as rather redundant. But now this narrative is gaining traction again, and this should be connected with international political developments, like Trump in the US, Orban in Hungary and so on. The rise of populist parties all over the world definitely has an impact"* (R4)

Inevitably the old and familiar discourse of job-stealing migrant was revitalized, though not only because of the macro-political scenery or the limited generation of nativist resentment by the welfare provisions narratives. The resurgence can also be traced to two interconnected dynamics: the particulars of Greece's history towards migration as a phenomenon and the targeted enmeshment of the economic and refugee 'crises'. Whilst the competition over welfare resources has consistently provided a platform for the promotion and escalation of nativist

agendas, especially within periods of financial austerity, it is important to dismantle here a controversial causality. The connection between the economic crisis and the narrative of nativism is indeed very much present and seldom drives the arguments against the migrant-Other, but the relationship between the two is not causal and in fact much more nuanced because the causality in question is propagated:

> "*It is quite deterministic to say that a phenomenon as complex as racism is born within and because of the financial crisis. It is not a pavlovian response that sees the strengthening of racism only because of austerity. There are many crucial mediations: mainly the role of the political system as a whole. Golden Dawn took advantage of the proliferation of the racist discourses reproduced by the entirety of the political establishment, it capitalized on that proliferation, it saw an opening that could be filled. But the [racist] pattern was utilized by all the political spectrum. That's the only way to approach the rise of racism without a one-dimensional perspective"* (R38)

A respondent from the municipality of Athens explained how the 'transit country' tradition (explored in chapter 5) played a role in the formation and transformation of the 'job-stealing' narrative throughout the years:

> "*We were a transit country for a long time – at least that is what we imagined, so the migrants were coming here for specific reasons: mainly to work. They did not need to be here beyond that – we did not need them to be here for anything else, they had no other rights. They were coming here, they were working during the season, got their money, sent these money back home and that was it. It was a convenient situation. And now we are supposed to give them the same rights Greeks have? But you cannot become Greek – you are born Greek*" (R22)[77]

The deeply rooted, ironic expectation of the migrant as a lesser citizen is telling. However, the importance of migrant workers – especially in the agricultural industry – was a much-contested topic during the 2000's and 2010's nativist debate. A reporter covering migration developments since the early 2010s remarked:

> "*I have not really heard the argument about migrants allegedly taking 'our' jobs in the recent years. You can always counter it anyway, by the fact that Bangladeshi workers*

[77] My respondent here ironically signals to an old nationalist slogan, particularly popular in the 1990's and the 2000's that proclaimed: "You will never be Greek, Albanian".

are picking up strawberries in the fields – if you ask a Greek to take such job, he won't. The case of Manolada was the answer to many myths" (R21).

The reporter refers to the case '*Chowdury and others vs. Greece'* (European Commission 2017d) that was brought before the European Court of Strasburg.[78] After an extreme episode in 2013 when several irregular migrant workers were shot and injured during a protest for the inhumane working conditions the case gained significant publicity.[79] Elaborating on the issue further, a respondent from the Greek Forum of Migrants recalled a moment when:

> *"IOM was organizing in 2014 a scheme for voluntary returns - and many Pakistanis and Bangladeshis left Greece. Then, the Greek landowners who used to hire Pakistanis to pick up strawberries did not know what to do. Greek landlords were looking for someone to rent the underground apartments that Pakistanis used to rent and they couldn't find anybody. They were in distress and everyone was calling here [at the Forum]: companies and hotels begging for migrant workers to hire.*" (R29)

The reason that the case of Manolada and the voluntary return scheme are mentioned here is because they showcase how the narrative about 'job stealing migrants' is rather inaccurate. The job positions that are available to migrants are often underpaid, exploitative and even dangerous. In other words, they are positions that, according to many respondents, would not be easily filled by Greeks since *"most Greeks have a support network, a family, someone that can provide them financial assistance – they have a choice not to take the job*" (R4). An Afghan migrant was more explicit: "*Many young Greeks are unemployed because they do not want to work in farms a migrant, or an asylum seeker want to work -if they cannot find a job is because the State of the employers do not want to offer them jobs*" (R13). Therefore, the notion of 'competition' for the same jobs proves to be rather misplaced. Moreover, "*the financial crisis negatively affected migrants more than the Greeks. There was indeed an incoming refugee influx but at the same time there were migrant communities that left Greece to reach northern*

[78] The case concerned the allegations of 42 Bangladeshi individuals recruited as seasonal workers in 2012 and 2013 (without a Greek work permit) to work at the main strawberry farm in Manolada, in the region of Peloponnese. The applicants testified that their employers failed to pay their wages and even obliged them to work under the supervision of armed guards. See https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/case-law/chowdury-and-others-v-greece-0_en

[79] In 2017, the Court found that the events to constitute a "form of exploitation subsumed by the definition of trafficking, as is clearly shown in Article 4a) of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings". See https://www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/en/content/ecthr-chowdury-and-others-v-greece-application-no-2188415-30-march-2017. For an in-depth exploration of the events surrounding the seminal case of Manolada and its ramifications, as well as the contested topic of migrant labor exploitation, see https://g2red.org/manolada-story-behind-2-euroskg-strawberries/.

European countries" (R15).[80] Notwithstanding the considerable proof contrary to the myth of job-stealing migrants, the narrative persistently reconfigured and remained relevant despite the passing of time and the promising era of solidarity in 2015. Such persistence can be attributed to the deliberate effort of the Greek governments of austerity (not only of the right wing) to deflect attention away from the structural and inconvenient truths of pauperization, by creating a causal link between the alleged pressures created by migration on the economy and the prolongation of austerity. A lawyer with considerable experience in handling cases of racist violence elaborates on the popularity of this causality:

> "*When it comes to the memorandum period, it is clear that when the political system has to implement a number of antipopular fiscal policies, it increasingly reverts to racist discourse. There is indeed a connection between the promotion of austerity politics and the rise of racist utterances – exactly because it provides a justification for the political elites in explaining what went wrong and why peoples' lives are becoming worse by placing the blame elsewhere. This myth is a fundamental aspect of the worldview of the far right – and of the Golden Dawn – and a strategy they employ to win people over: by urging society to connect the deterioration of the financial situation with the influx of foreigners. Migrant workers played a part in the decrease of daily wages, so the myth was quite efficient in groups of society that find themselves lower in the hierarchy of labor division – namely, the unskilled workers. This myth still plays a role, especially in working class neighborhoods traditionally targeted by Golden Dawn."* (R38)[81]

The connection between the economic crisis and the migrant-Other as a financial burden (either in terms of jobs or welfare) can therefore be seen as a convenient justification nurtured and utilized by the political establishment, and also after a point by the Golden Dawn. As a migrant

[80] Invoking data from the Hellenic Statistical Authority, Papastergiou and Takou (2014:36) underlined how "[d]uring the decade between 1998 and 2008, which was marked by the increase and legalization of the migrant population in Greece, the number of jobs in Greece increased by 541,000… During the same period… unemployment decreased from 11.4% to 7.9%... The onset of the crisis in 2008 surely changes the circumstances. The ongoing austerity and economic depression has propelled unemployment from 7.5% to 27.9%... It should also be noted that unemployment rates are *higher among immigrants than among the indigenous workforce*... Therefore, the overall unemployment rate, which, as we saw, is 28%, translates into 24% unemployment among Greeks and 40.3% unemployment among foreign nationals."

[81] The argument regarding the competition that arises between natives belonging to the working class and the migrants that come to allegedly claim the same jobs has been noted repeatedly in literature of nativism (Betz, 2019) but also in literature of welfare chauvinism (Keskinen *et al*., 2016; Van der Waal *et al*., 2010). However, since I argue that in the Greek case such competition does not correspond to the reality of the situation, then what is left of the competition narrative – and thus what I focus on – is its sensational, propagandistic utilization in the far-right agenda.

community representative said: "*racists saw the opportunity to say that migrants brought the [financial] crisis. This is such a foolish argument. But if you are an unemployed person you want to hear this. Many Greeks wanted to hear this*" (R36). In this way, this myth constitutes one of the legacies of the proliferation of anti-migrant sentiment and actions that characterized the early 2010's. This justification has been proven opportunistic through the history of the extremist party, which:

> "*even until 2012 never had a solid narrative about the financial crisis – they added it at the very last minute [before the 2012 elections]. Golden Dawn operated with a clear xenophobic agenda. it was all about sending the foreigners back to their countries, it was about national unity, protecting the national economy, promoting national self-sufficiency, lashing against globalization… Golden Dawn only added its anti-memorandum agenda when they realized that it was a crucial platform and they could not do without it."* (R37)

In this sense, the causality between the two crises, the subsequent frames they generated (namely austerity and nativism) and the cunning manner in which they were obscured by the discourses of the (far) right should be thoroughly questioned as an attempt to naturalize a 'reflexive' response to the financial crisis, and to mobilize an affective release of the pressure brought about by economic hardship**.** Moreover, it should not only be disentangled but even inverted: austerity does not cause anti-migrant hostility, rather the latter incorporates and secures the politics of the former (Carastathis, 2015).

Overall, this section argued that the provision of cash assistance, accommodation and free healthcare to refugees and asylum seekers highlighted the possibility that the Greek is not prioritized in terms of rights and welfare over the migrant-Other. This possibility counters the expectation that the native holds a privileged position, just by virtue of his native-ness and rekindles the affective hostility of the narrative of the lazy, welfare-depleting migrant. Inevitably, the debate on material support to refugees and asylum seekers tends to return to the framing of migrant-Others as a financial burden to the already austerity-afflicted country, the presence of whom deprives the Greeks of the already scarce employment opportunities. However, it is argued that both before and after the economic and refugee 'crises' the narrative of job-stealing migrants does not correspond to reality and is rather utilized both by extremist and mainstream political parties as a strategy of scapegoating.

6.4 Unsurpassable differences

Along with the frustration over welfare provisions and the overwhelming sense of betrayal by internal Others, the third and widest component of the nativist framework in contemporary Greece is found in the discourses of cultural incompatibility between the Greek and the migrant-Other. The preoccupation with the 'identitarian' focus of nativism (Betz, 2019) that sees an urgent need to protect features deemed essential for the preservation of the nation (Guia, 2016) simultaneously invites and challenges the combination of the nativist conceptualization with the proliferating discourses of cultural racism (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991; Balibar, 2005). A closer look at the myths of incompatibility reveals the need to subdivide the genres of said myths and, consequently, the multifarious narratives they draw upon. In other words, the 'essentialization' and 'absolutization' (Rodat, 2017) found in the horizontality of irreconcilable cultures is predicated upon the following: the imagery of the migrant-Other as an inherently criminal element, the generalization of the migrant-Other as Muslim (and the misconceptions stemming from this generalization), and the overall belief that the migrant-Other is a threat and an antithesis to everything that Greekness is imagined to symbolize and that the native Greek is imagined to embody.

6.4.1 The vague figure of the deviant migrant

As discussed in the previous section, the opening of detention centers right before the 'summer of migration' in 2015 set in motion a 'media war' (R15) that raged daily and fed on the pre-existing overlap between migration and criminality, a manifestation of institutionalized racism that was critically observed during the late 1990's (Galariotis *et al*., 2017; Karydis, 1996; Lefkaditou, 2017; Trubeta, 2000; Tsoukala, 2005). It is noteworthy that in the midst of what has been heralded as a period of solidarity, the fear of "where will all these migrants go" and its constant exacerbation by the press was a simultaneous, albeit not dominant, trend. As the frequency and magnitude of the human flows from the islands increased exponentially in comparison to 2014, media discourses projected the migrant-criminality nexus on this increase of refugees arriving in Greece (R15):

> *"In the summer of 2015, the chaos created with the RICs [Reception and Identification Centers] became fertile ground for the spread of fake news about refugees engaging in deviant acts, like vandalisms or thefts. Of course, this was far from true yet it created a certain disposition [against migrants]. So, around that time, we have the first attacks to the migrant camps, with clear far-right group characteristics. I mean, the attacks*

> *were coming from 'xrisavgites' and we can witness certain organized groups with strong far right elements – but this is not discussed in the media. The press rather frames it as actions of 'frustrated citizen groups' that react to refugee deviance. So migrant criminality is a dominant narrative, seen as the result of SYRIZA's mishandling of the situation and of the opening of borders, but what is silenced is the fact that all these [attacks] are organized by far-right elements trying to cultivate and take advantage of a xenophobic climate."* (R15) [82]

In Lesvos, fake news was propagated and, according to a politically embedded respondent on the island, the problem was their exposure to a substantial part of the population. In a discussion before the summer of 2018, the respondent remarked on the alarmingly recurrent circulation of fake news:

> *"Yesterday, actually, there was a piece of fake news that was even reproduced in national media. Allegedly, a group of migrants illegally entered a farm and slaughtered a sheep. This [news report] was shared by local media and many people of the island, I mean councilmen of the island and individuals occupying significant political posts"* (R5)

The respondent referred to a group knows as 'Πατριωτική Κίνηση Λεσβου' (Patriotic Movement of Lesvos), known for expressing far right rhetoric, maintaining explicit connections with Golden Dawn members in the island, and for influencing what is produced and reproduced in local (social) media. The movement, according to the respondent, was organized from people who had professional or political ties with the party of New Democracy and was supported by the political office of Charalambos Athanasiou, a member of the Parliament from New Democracy who displayed little opposition to the distribution of fake news (R5).[83] He continued:

[82] 'Xrisagvites' literally translates to golden dawn supporters, however in the Greek vernacular it does not necessarily denote an official golden dawn member or a golden dawn voter but, in a wider sense, a supporter and apologist for far-right ideologies and practices.

[83] Members of the movement, that Charalambos Athanasiou has argued represents "a movement of citizens that aims to protect the island from uncontrollable migrant flows" were also involved in the violent episodes that took place in the central square of Mytilene in April 2018, where a mix of far-right extremists, Golden Dawn members and hooligans attacked refugees and asylum seekers. See also the report by Efsyn in 2018 where it is also reported that several members of the Patriotic Movement were proud and vocal about the violent incidents in their social media accounts. Available at https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/dikaiomata/148482_oi-fasistes-den-mporesan-na-krypsoyn-kamari-toys.

> *"your Facebook timeline ends up being filled by all the dangers that illegal immigrants pose for the local society: there are allegations that they are slaughtering animals, raping women, defecating on churches, even that they are crowding outside local brothels etc."* (R5)[84]

Unpacking the variations and specificities that come with the familiar trope of criminality offer some critical insights. In Lesvos, and specifically in the northern part of the island (see Siegel 2019), the alleged crime and deviance often takes on a destructive, illogical texture: the migrants are framed as illegal aliens that revel on encroaching and infringing on the laws and rules of the nation. By extension, they disregard not only the written law but also the tradition, the religion, and public decency. This imagery is more adjacent to the outlining of the migrant-Other as a disrespectful and offensive figure of deviance, an existence that cannot be controlled or trusted. Simultaneously, within and beyond the context of Lesvos, the imagery diversifies and becomes more volatile – once again retracting to popular stereotypes against certain nationalities:

> "*Moroccans and Algerians are rumored to be bandits that will draw a knife against you… Pakistanis and Afghans are rumored to be thieves and rapists.*" (R12)

The infamy of Pakistanis as rapists in recent years was significantly shaped by the highly publicized case of a Pakistani migrant who, in the summer of 2012, raped a teenage Greek girl in the island of Paros (Iefimerida, 2014). This essentializing tendency to draw sweeping conclusions over the criminal nature of an entire ethnic group was traced by a lawyer with previous experience working both for NGOs and the Greek Council for Refugees (both in Athens and in Lesvos):

> *"It is the story of Agios Panteleimonas repeating itself. The main idea is that based on specific minor or moderate incidents of criminality, an arbitrary connection is woven in the collective narrative between those incidents and the concept of foreignness as such. Even though it is barely novel to see pickpockets or cases of minor theft, it all*

[84] It should be noted that depending on the media source, the reporting of such events was not always inflammatory or fear mongering. For example, when in 2016 an incident of vandalism in the Moria cemetery took place, the local news site reported that residents of Moria attributed the vandalism to 'a small group of troublemaking migrants… and not the entirety of the migrants', see http://www.lesvosnews.gr/vandalismi-ke-katastrofes-mnimion-ke-tafon-sto-nekrotafio-tis-morias/

goes back to the personal story of the one victimized. If someone stole my phone and he was Algerian – then that's it." (R11)[85]

What must be highlighted here is the metaphorical 'jump' from the individual experience of victimization – traumatic as it may be – to an active participation in racist, generalizing rhetoric. In other words, the progress from a certain degree of vigilance based on experience to an unshakable belief in the deviance of Algerians generally suggests that the experience itself is utilized as a justification to unleash a pre-existing presupposition, to allow for the proverbial self-fulfilling prophecy to unfold – a process that mystifies itself as rational and expected whilst being irrational and imbued with feeling. The migrant presence as a trigger that invites and multiplies crime, insecurity and lack of safety was inevitably prevalent in the urban scenery as well. A parliamentarian of the party of New Democracy would stipulate how:

"The number of those who were 'trapped' in Greece – I mean those who tried to cross the borders to the borders but did not get to do it in time, is much larger than before. Allow me to believe that the situation in Athens is quite alarming, especially in certain neighborhoods that have almost become a ghetto: around Omonia's Square or Ameriki's Square, even in the neighborhood of Kipseli" (R23)

The mythology of the flooding numbers is central in this narrative, even though there has been ample evidence to the contrary. By the end of 2018 – the year when I conducted the interview quoted – the number of recognized refugees was under 30.000 with some 50.000 application pending (Papastergiou & Takou, 2019). In the case of downtown Athens specifically, the fluctuating visibility of migrants is hardly a matter of actual numbers but rather an instrumentalized political strategy. Depending on who utters a relevant argument or criticism and with what political agenda, it can be utilized to either underline the causality of migrant presence and heightened criminality (thus triggering societal unrest and worry - as is the case above), to justify harsher policing practices, or to serve as proof that the State remains (in)efficient in protecting its citizens from 'illegal immigrants that flood the streets'. At the same time, building on the grim picture of disorder, the imagery produced with the invocation of urban ghettos –symbolic imagery of chaos and material deterioration – again incites the

[85] Agios Panteleimonas is a working-class neighborhood in the center of Athens with a strong migrant presence which was targeted by in the early 2010s by Golden Dawn as it presented a suitable arena to propagate their fascist, anti-state, anti-immigrant agenda (Ellinas, 2013).

urgency for securitization that has consistently offered fertile ground for surges of anti-migrant panic in the Greek context. Either way, the emphasis on matters of security and the concomitant eagerness to explain criminality as an alien phenomenon 'imported' by migrants that 'bring' crime with them when they cross the borders(R38), is not novel in the Greek political scenery (Karyotis & Patrikios, 2010; Swarts & Karakatsanis, 2013). Karyotis' (2012:398) argument that "the social construction of migration as a threat was an elite-driven, top-down process, developed through an interwoven web of discursive and nondiscursive formulations" is indeed reflected in the persistence of right-wing media and political discourse to draw deterministic connections between poverty, deprivation and criminality whilst exaggerating – without a solid reference to actual reports or statistics –the participation of migrants in criminal activities:

> *"It makes perfect sense: when citizens see so many foreigners that are experiencing hardship, that are financially and psychologically exhausted, they become concerned… citizens are pre-occupied with the issue of their safety and the criminality of migrants. They see immigrants on the streets, without a job or an income… you understand that their insecurity is justified. I don't blame migrants for a peak in criminality but there have been several reported incidents where migrants committed illegal acts. Detention centers could limit these incidents to a degree, migrants would be provided with food and better living conditions…"* (R23)

This extract is indicative of how the skepticism towards the migrant-Other conveniently adopts a rhetoric that oscillates between an indirect phobia that presumably sympathizes and an explicit but righteous worry that warrants detention, that ultimately finds comfortable essentializations in both scenarios. Moreover, the 'several reported incidents' about alleged illegal acts once again invokes a threatening but ultimately unsubstantiated rhetoric about migrant criminality – a rhetoric that frames migrants as disproportionately responsible for violent crimes, sexual offenses, robberies, assaults etc.. The 'illegal act' committed is most of the times the act of border crossing itself, with about 90.000 migrants' arrests reported in 2018 and about 120.000 migrants' arrests in 2019.[86] Beyond that, police statistics have consistently shown that Greek citizens are overwhelmingly responsible for most categories of crimes in a national scale (ERTnews, 2021) – even though reliance on such statistics is in itself fragile, considering the effects of institutionalized racism in the reporting and archiving of criminal

[86] For a full report, see http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang=%27..%27&perform=view&id=93706&Itemid=2425&lang=

acts. But what is rather salient here is that the repeated invocation of legitimate worry is used to mystify the figure of the migrant as inherently problematic, and even more as solid proof that detention is the most appropriate course of State action that can counter the problem. Conversely, the State's (in)action in implementing policies offering solutions to the 'exhaustion' of migrants, their lack of opportunities for legal labor, and the obstacles faced when accessing education is conveniently left outside the debate. Therefore, the same story can be told in a different way. A migrant community representative argues:

> "*if I am looking for food in churches, in solidarity kitchens – even in the garbage – what else am I supposed to do? If I have a family to feed, and I have no other means of support then I'll have to steal. This is how the Afghans or other migrant communities got a bad reputation. But the real question is why society lead the migrant to crime.*" (R13)

Instead of embracing the complexity of the issue and acknowledging the structural inequalities and the sense of powerlessness that might potentially lead a migrant to a criminal act, the nativist narrative insists on the ominous figures of criminality that cause a 'justified feeling of unsafety'. The migrant is denied of any other aspect of his identity except for his deviance. His 'hardships' remain vague, his story unknown. The narrative of criminality is employed as an opportunity to circle back to SYRIZA's responsibility in championing an open border policy (at least until the EU-Turkey Declaration), and preludes the final blows to the legitimacy of the welcoming culture (through the ascription of the SYRIZA government as Others-within).

6.4.2 The Muslim threat: Greekness at peril

The discourse surrounding the migrant-Other as a fundamental threat in Greece is typified by the persistent claims of incompatibility between the native and the non-native, predominantly in terms of religion and culture (Triantafyllidou, 1998; Triantafyllidou, 2001). At the turn of the 21st century, the Greeks were reported to be least likely to call themselves racist (Kiprianos *et al.*, 2003). Despite the claim of 'innocence', research has shown that Greeks were confident that the 'symbolic boundaries' of language, culture, religion, race, education, and occupation drew a profound separation between them and the migrants, systematically displaying high scores in all six boundaries amongst 21 European nationalities (Bail, 2008). Whilst the country's history regarding attitudes towards migration cannot easily be reduced to generalized claims, it is reasonable to consider religion and culture (and subsequently race) as equally

integral and embedded within a substantiation of irrevocable distance from the migrant-Other.[87] These 'symbolic boundaries' explained as "conceptual distinctions made by social actors… [that] separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership." (Lamont & Molnar, 2002:168), cross-pollinate and substantiate one another, surviving across decades via the perpetual revitalization and regeneration of diversifying narratives of apprehension.

In attempting to explore and analyze these interconnections it is important to first focus on how the purported religion of the migrant-Other was constructed as a prominent axis of division. Commenting on the configurations of anti-Islamic sentiment after 2015, it was argued that the religious element played a role in circumventing the generally welcoming framework towards migrants, as the refugee crisis paralleled a period of significant terrorist activity across other European countries. It was therefore *"fairly easy to build upon such a phobia about the kind of migrants coming to our country… One could trace the islamophobia in the representation of refugees as belonging to a lesser culture while also dangerous for our own culture – for our own survival"* (R39). As the country entered the second year of the refugee 'crisis' and the worries surrounding the changing demographics of the migrant influx multiplied (see previous chapter), anxieties towards the religion of the incoming populations grew. Whilst the influx consisted predominantly of Syrians, the issue of religion was less pronounced given that "*in the mind of the average Greek, the Syrian is also a Christian, for reasons unbeknownst"* (R34). In Lesvos in particular, the geographical restriction of asylum seekers following the Joint Declaration in 2016 contributed to the propagation narratives, crucially influenced by the 'Patriotic Movement of Lesvos' mentioned above, that described migrants as having the intention "*to corrupt our civilization… to make us all Muslim; that they are acting as a Trojan horse to debilitate our culture and Christianity"* (R5) (Kirtsoglou & Tsimouris, 2018). One respondent, working in advocacy and with experience in dealing with anti-migrant myths and realities notes how:

> *"The nature, so to speak, of the phenomenon of racism has changed significantly – I think these situations go hand in hand. A change is brought in terms of the new ways in which the migrant populations are targeted. The problem is not so much the foreigner, the problem is the Muslim – the pervasive xenophobia is replaced by a pervasive*

[87] It is noteworthy that during the 2000s a certain flexibility was observed in the ways Greek national identity was understood in terms of policy, political discourse, and citizen attitudes (Anagnostou & Triantafyllidou, 2007; Triantafyllidou & Kouki, 2013).

islamophobia… I think this is the main issue now. I can see it in reports, I can sense it in the way people talk, I can hear it in informal discussions… So along with the religious aspect, the impossibility of assimilation is central." (R27)

This change could not only be attributed to the refugee 'crisis' but was also a fortification of the Golden Dawn rhetoric – irrespective of the fact that members of the neo-nazi party (even some of those elected in the Parliament) were already on trial in 2015 for the plethora of crimes committed. According to the respondent, the Golden Dawn discourse interprets any development towards a more open and humane migration policy as a vicious plan of governments complicit to the 'New World Order'. The accusation was made against both SYRIZA and other previous governments – namely, that they were traitors scheming to indoctrinate Greeks into the Muslim faith. For the Golden Dawn the anti-Muslim agenda did not coincide with the increased migrant influx during 2015 (and, as explored above, it was not causally linked with the financial crisis), it was already embedded within the extremist agenda of the party:

"*For the populist right, the narrative could move along the line of 'we had the financial crisis and now we have the destitute black immigrants' – but the Golden Dawn narrative was reversed: they [the politicians] brought the 'lathro-apoikous' [illegal settlers] here to 'de-hellenize' our nation. The aspect of conspiracy is always there*" (R27)[88]

This religious emphasis raises further issues that warrant critical consideration, the first being the dramatized, panic-inducing narrative of the Muslim migrant-Other posing a serious threat to the integrity of the imagined nation:

"Greece is a closed society, a defensive culture, where anything novel was never easily included – this is part of the country's political culture. It has to do with how the Greek state formed: the belief that everyone is 'out to get us', that everyone means us harm; the will to believe that we are victimized – which is a constantly present trend in

[88] I think it is important to note the use of the neologism 'lathro-apoikoi' here – which roughly translates to illegal settlers, as it connects to the 'lathro-metanastes' that has been mentioned before. In both cases, the word 'illegal' does not do justice to the hostility and gravitas of 'lathro'. It means far more than 'illegal' in bearing significant amounts of sentiment; it carries a heavy genealogy of racism and an affective economy of dehumanization and accumulates anxiety behind the justification of a 'fair' description. So, the lathro-apoikoi are threatening colonizers; they seek to spread among the Greeks, dissolve the ideals and traditions of the Greek culture and religion and subsequently cripple Greekness.

relevant research. This victimization was central also in the waves of emigration in 1990s…[the belief] that we need to defend ourselves, that there is an invasion, that we are not properly protected by Europe even though we are the continent's border; and of course, the Turkish threat – which is readily revitalized when there is a discussion on 'invasion'" (R37)

The message conveyed is a generalized conflation of religious, racial, and cultural otherness; in other words, the discourses of neo-racism are becoming more and more prominent. This progression is traced by several respondents:

"The cultural difference has come to specify the religion – so by referring to the 'other religion' we denote Islam. And every foreigner that seems different in terms of their skin color is immediately considered a Muslim potential terrorist" (R37)

"*the whole argument of migrants who cannot be assimilated has to with the racial aspect. For the hardcore racist right, the notion of 'culture' is a code in order not to specifically refer to race. But everybody knows that when one speaks of migrants being 'different' to us, one speaks of someone with a darker skin tone who is certainly Muslim"* (R38)

The deliberate 'blurring' of boundaries that signifies the difference to the migrant-Other contributes to an ominous aggregation of incompatibility – an 'intersectional' process of othering. As Balibar (1991) describes, the target of neo-racism is not the 'Muslim' or the 'radical', it is the 'Muslim as radical' or the 'radical as Muslim' (or similarly the 'migrant as criminal' and the 'criminal as migrant'). This co-articulation amounts to more than the sum of its parts, as racism displays its adaptability and "connections with the whole set of practices of social normalization and exclusion" (Balibar, 1991:49). A respondent from the RVRN highlighted the volatility of these co-articulations:

"*It is not by accident that the stereotype of the ultimate Other is projected on Pakistanis or Bangladeshis nowadays. Their religion, their color, the perception that they are fundamentalists, the fact that they are single men – which of course comes with their stereotyping as rapists. Also, it is very hard for them to learn the language. In all regards, they are being singled out. 'Standing out' as such is very problematic. It indicates that you are imprinted in the consciousness of the Greeks as the most foreign, the most strange.*" (R12)

Despite the influence of religion and culture in the designation of the migrant-Other, it is important to observe how race and language also factor – as elements constitutive of what it means to (not) be native. Describing 'Greekness', Triantafyllidou & Gropas (2009:962) outline "an amalgamate of (belief in) common ancestry, cultural traditions and religion". The demands of 'nativism' therefore increase when Greekness excludes the migrant-Other for not belonging to an imagined "Greek national consciousness", and failing to relate to the "language, religion, national traditions, and historical knowledge of the nation itself" (Triandafyllidou & Veikou, 2002:198). What emerges is a clear "*attachment to the past, a belief that 'We' have been here for longer than 'Them'*". (R22)

With the above in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising that in late 2018 a study indicated that only 3 out of 10 Greeks would accept a Muslim to as a member of their family (amongst the lowest in Europe), whilst 76% of Greek people considered that being Christian is very important in order for someone to share the 'national identity' (conversely the highest) (Pew Research Centre, 2018c). Moreover, 8 out of 10 Greeks were held confident beliefs that Muslim immigrants want to be distinct rather than adapt , with such views becoming more pronounced as one moves towards the right wing of the ideological spectrum (Pew Research Centre, 2016b). This pertinent shift in the 'burden' of proof, in other words the *"proliferation of the idea that even if we, the Greeks, accept them, they could never accept us*" (R27) represents a continuation of the tolerance debate that had emerged in the early 2010's when political and public discourse gravitated around the certainty that "*it is not that we have a problem with you - the problem is that you cannot be included, you are not assimilable''* (R27). The narrative seems to have persisted in remarkable similarity, since Triantafyllidou & Kouki (2013:721) concluded that "it is not a matter of 'us' tolerating them by applying our democratic principles, it is rather about 'them' who are 'intolerable' because of their intrinsic cultural features" almost a decade ago.

The persistent exaggeration of the incompatibility between Islam and Orthodox Christianity as an obstacle to Greek inclusion can be seen as deeply ordered and hierarchical (Christopoulos, 2012). Reverting to the perennial myths of Greece as the cradle of civilization and Greekness as the pure category emerging from this historical continuity, 89% of Greeks believe that their culture is superior to others – a claim that fuels the superiority of the imagined community that Greekness belongs to (Pew Research Centre, 2018c). This imagined superiority stretches beyond the claim of mere difference by foregrounding a sense of homogeneity (at least in the

ethnoreligious realm) that allegedly binds all Greeks together and leaves every Other outside (Karyotis, 2012). The argument can therefore be made that the Greek nativist configuration relies heavily upon superiority, it reveals an existential anxiety of inferiority that drives the persistence for proving so, and contrasts sharply the 'identitarian' argument ventured by other researchers (De Genova, 2016; Michaels, 1995).

Whilst the 'bottom-line' is indeed that the immigrant is simply not native (De Genova, 2016), the Greek must also assert this distance vertically by emphasizing the migrant-Other's inferiority. The native is "*willing to be sympathetic to the migrants but under conditions and rules of ownership"* (R22), and when the migrant-Other attempts to question and challenge these dynamics, the native is triggered (R34).

There are some final, almost paradoxical ramifications to consider regarding these myths of the incompatible migrant-Other. A journalist recalls a story in a hospital which many pregnant refugee women would visit*:*

> *"The women would see that the gynecologist in the hospital was a man and they would refuse to be examined. I remember some Greeks getting frustrated, saying that it is impossible to communicate with 'these people'. There was an army general saying something to that effect so I turn to him and I said: 'Look, I am a Christian Orthodox woman but I would not choose a man as a gynecologist. You can ask your wife or your daughter, too'. He was left speechless and he was just staring at me. I mean, we have to account for these cases of miscommunication – not everything goes back to 'culture'"* (R21).[89]

One respondent also noted how the insistence on precluding any form of inclusion solidifies the migrants' conviction that they have no ties or responsibility towards the Greek State, that they are just in the country on borrowed time and are expecting to be sent away at any moment (R22). This, in turn, breeds even more racism and bigotry when the natives witness the migrants acting in a way that reflects such uncertainty – for example when they do not care about the conditions of the apartment they are renting - thus fulfilling the expectation of the native that the migrant is inherently filthy, uncivilized, and inferior.

[89] Interestingly here, the verb used by my respondent that I translated as 'communicate' ('*συνεννοούμαι*' in Greek) has a more nuanced meaning in the vernacular. The verb also denotes the possibility of making sense of what your interlocutor is saying to you, or the absence of such possibility - both literally and metaphorically. It means that you can speak the same language, that you share the discursive and cultural codes, that you find overlap in meanings, intended actions and practices.

Under this section, a counterargument of nativist and cultural racist narratives of migrant criminality and islamophobia was purported.

6.5 Permutations of nativism

The final section of this chapter will briefly pinpoint the permutations of the nativist narratives and explore the potential reason behind these permutations. In choosing to speak of 'permutations' I wish to highlight how the nativist narratives are conveniently utilized or combined in the discourse of nativist dichotomies. As one respondent argued:

> "*It started with the 'they are coming for our jobs', then it went to the myth of the cultural difference and the impossibility of assimilation, then it turned to the issue of religion and the Muslims that are coming to get us, and then it built upon the narrative that the migrants are not cultivated and educated, that they are outside the European way of life, they beat up their wives and so on*" (R29)

Through the evolution, transmutation, and development of these narratives, what is revealed is the persistent search for the construction of division based either in the dignified anger over welfare provisions to migrants or the migrant criminality or the cultural and religious incompatibility. As a journalist who has closely followed these permutations, the persistence is followed by the need to substantiate the various arguments through essentialisms:

> *"I suspect that the xenophobic arguments are somewhat interchangeable, that they have no definitive character. They are employed depending on the political conjuncture or depending on the audience. I feel that there is not much 'reality' in these arguments – there is just an effort to find the appropriate vocabulary to express, depending on the circumstance, what is will be conveniently received by the audience"* (R15)

The point here is that different (institutional) actors espouse different facets of nativism to justify their racist and exclusionary narratives and practices. The Church will capitalize on Islamophobia, the far-right will invest in fear-mongering about the threat to national homogeneity and identity, the neoliberal-right will lament the cultural gap between the Greek and the Oriental migrant-Other, local political actors in the Aegean islands will multiply the discourse on criminality and deviance, municipal actors will spearhead an anti-migrant campaign to protect the Greek children from the 'health hazard' personified in refugees;

various institutional actors will both champion and nurture the substantiation of each myth. This leads to two interrelated observations. On the one hand, as Balibar (1991:40) has argued, "there is not merely a single invariant racism but a number of racisms, forming a broad, open spectrum of situations". Balibar (1991:40) added that "a determinate racist configuration has no fixed frontiers", but it remains open to an array of potentialities, and when influenced by the historical and socio-political concurrence, relevant manifestations will divert and deviate "within the spectrum of possible racisms". I would argue that Balibar (1991) makes an important observation on the contingency of racism, as a way to establish boundaries of difference that perpetually seeks legitimizing elaborations. This contingency can be traced respectively to nativism – a practice that also relies on the fortification of boundaries. On the other hand, beyond the acknowledgement of indeterminacy, what should be considered here is the convenience of interchangeability between the aspects of the nativist rhetoric, achieved through the utilitarian invocation of any and all myths that justify anti-migrant hostility. The potentialities of anti-migrant narrative evolution manifest not only through the nuances of nativism as a phenomenon, but they are also *made* to be there, they are intentionally cultivated and deliberately preserved. This malleability of the justifications of fears towards the migrant-Other provides a perpetual scapegoat on whom the nation's afflictions can be attributed. A respondent from Lesvos shared an interesting observation:

> *"The islanders see many Afghans sitting in the main square and, in a childish way, experience a xenophobic reflex that seeks the return to a former state of affairs. It is not about whether they would wish to see children play in the square or if they want to be the ones sitting in the square every day. It is about the… right to dictate who will and who will not be in the square."* (R11)

The deprivation that drives the desire for a return to an abstract former state of affairs is simultaneously material, spatial and temporal - and further reflected in the symbolic realm. It is the space claimed and coveted as belonging to the native that the migrant seems to occupy. It is the imagined community of Greekness, the nostalgic and reassuring imagery of similarity that the Other is infringing upon. It is the efforts to repel the possible loss of these essential tenets of Greekness (and consequently loss of the tenets that have constructed the image of the Self) that demand the contingency of nativist and racist narratives as a defensive reflex. Therefore, the permutations of nativist narratives can be seen as indicative of the need to highlight and maintain the distance between the native and the non-native, manifesting at the moment of the encounter between the native and the migrant-Other.

6.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter sought to critically engage with the array of narratives through which the nativist dichotomization between the Greek and the migrant-Other is constructed. It first tackled the process of designating the political elites and migrant rights' defenders as internal Others and highlighted the importance that this process carries in the delegitimization of solidarity and humanitarianism. The outcome of this trajectory is the prescription of pro-migrant positionality as essentially anti-Greek, subsequently removing any ethical obstacles in the expression of anti-migrant hostility and framing such responses as justified reactions. The discussion then turned to the ramifications of welfare provisions to asylum seekers and refugees, particularly in their propensity to challenge State prioritization of the Greek citizen in both material and symbolic terms. Crucially, the causal link between the hardships of financial austerity and the refugee 'crisis' cultivated by the (far)right discourse were disentangled. Paying specific attention to the to the implicit and explicit ways in which essentialist articulations of religious and cultural distance are combined, the chapter also explored the justifications of threat and neo-racist discourses, exemplified in the myths of migrant criminality and cultural incompatibility between the Greek and the migrant-Other.

The concept of nativism offers a useful framework for analysis in its focus on the vehement, recurring comparison between the native and the stranger, allowing a critical examination of the sensitive balance between the scenario of permanence and the desire for prolongation (as a temporality that, albeit frustrating, allows room for change and a return to an elusive former *status quo* of normality). Nativist dichotomies thus set out to ascertain how, despite the continuation of the 'crisis' of migration, the uncertainty of co-existence with Others will be regulated by rigid dichotomies between the native and the non-native. Whilst exclusionary nativism still operates under the assumption that there might be a foreigner that is here to stay, however undesirable, if he does then his position will be very carefully framed and limited. Nativism attempts to outline the 'rules' in a scenario of co-existence; it is the infringement upon these rules that sketches the internal and external Others as enemies whilst also preempting or preparing the possibility of racism and necropolitical exclusion. I consider it an eloquent theoretical apparatus precisely because of its inherent paradox: the categories it outlines and compares (the native and the foreigner) are dynamic and ever-changing, thus rendering the attempted dichotomy perpetually unfeasible. The issues explored in this chapter

are therefore introduced and handled as rhetorical questions for which there can be no definitive answers – there is no satisfying conclusion regarding the native's insistence on material and symbolic prioritization. The lack of answers suggests that the profound belief of distance and difference demands a re-evaluation, a reflection upon the concepts of sameness and equality. Such a possibility would deconstruct the imagined position of superiority that the Greek native expects, and further call into question the validity of an already withering ontological certainty. It is here that the narratives of nativism and racism become contingent, in their constant search of the paths that will once again ascertain both horizontal and vertical differences in distance and superiority respectively.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Summarizing the Line of Argumentation

This thesis sought to address how the Greek refugee 'crisis' of 2015 inspired or reshaped narratives that led to the framing of the figure of the 'migrant-Other'. When studying and researching this figure, it became clear that it is difficult to articulate an argumentation process that can acknowledge or explain the phenomenon in its entirety. There is no definitive causality, no linear etiological schema that yields all-encompassing results, and no conceptualization that covers the entire spectrum of hostile or racist happenstance. Even when focusing on one particular context, namely Greece, the accounts vary, the facts abound, and the narratives diverge considerably. In trying to introduce a degree of organization to this complexity, I attempted to highlight the most significant factors contributing to the framing of the migrant-Other. In the Greek context, these factors included the backdrop of financial precarity, the legacy of far-right discourses, distrust in the roles and intentions of European institutions and the Greek government, inefficiencies of the migration policy regime, and fears of cultural incompatibility together with the long-standing cultural boundaries that substantiate them. These factors should also be placed in a temporal context. Namely, the period between 2015 and 2019 as considered in the present analysis. As this indicates, the trajectory of framing the migrant-Other coincided with the duration of the SYRIZA government (January 2015 – July 2019) and, consequently, the extension of solidarity and the emergence of nativist dichotomies were explored in tandem with fluctuating levels of trust regarding the ability of the leftist government to materialize its migration policy agenda.

In delineating the thematic, political, and temporal factors, the analysis of this thesis was structured according to three pivotal (sub)questions:

- How did the legal and policy nexus utilized to handle the migration 'crisis' contribute to the legitimation of othering and dehumanization?
- How and why were the initial responses of solidarity and humanitarianism retracted and what did these responses transform to?
- What are the main nativist narratives used to outline the figure of the internal and the external Other?

In answering the first of these sub-questions, the structural dynamics of the migration policy framework employed by the European Union and Greek government were explored (Chapter 4). Besides crisis, this chapter unpacked the notions of emergency and exception. The vocabulary and conditions of emergency were examined (as embedded in key political apparatus such as the Turkey Declaration or the Relocation and Resettlement Schemes), and the modalities of the state of exception were reconstructed in a threefold division: exception as comfort, exception as bargain, and exception as entrapment. Using this schema, the imperative to 'de-exceptionalize' the ripple effect of migration policy was purported. Namely, by tracing the trajectory by which the Greek government and institutions were politically pressured to adhere to a migration policy that clouded the notions of sovereignty and responsibility, the abstraction of 'exception' became more legible and tangible. I argued that Greece became entangled in a crisis of dysnomic policy, brought about by fragile and incapacitated policies of exception rather than a 'refugee crisis'. It was an entanglement characterized by a normalization of exception, in which the Greek State was both complicit in and confined by. The lack of infrastructure, institutional co-ordination, administrative know-how and political will remained undealt with, being addressed only in statements and not in actions of solidarity. Instead, the cumulative inefficiency caused by these shortcomings was simplistically perceived as proof that migration is a problem, a burden, and a challenge that cannot be resolved. When migration - as a phenomenon itself - is perceived as (and placed within the ontology of) crisis, the migrants themselves become the personification of crisis. Crucially, within the dysnomic landscape that rendered European and State institutions unaccountable, the figure of the migrant-Other is seen as the manifestation of the problem itself. Inherently imbalanced, flawed, and designed to fail, the exceptional policies of migration fostered a persistent crisis. As perpetual exception was produced and reproduced in cyclical fashion, implicitly cultivated was a culture of dehumanization, intricately embedded in the legal, policy, and political discourse about the migrant-Other. Throughout this process, I ultimately argue, that the migrant-Other is framed as a precariously balanced figure between the biopolitical and the necropolitical: a subject simultaneously kept alive (through the inefficient policies of restriction and control), and exposed to death (through being targeted as the source of the migration 'problem').

The legitimization of dehumanization that occurred throughout the first years of the refugee 'crisis' conditioned the imagined relationship with the migrant-Other. Namely, the analyses of chapter 5 and 6 reflected upon the interactions between the host society and the incoming populations as a tidal movement: *towards* and *away from* the migrant-Other. The possibility

and of this encounter was heavily influenced by a culture of dehumanization, implicitly and explicitly articulated by the migration policy regime. This movement therefore operated on the basis of a dehumanized figure of the migrant-Other; encounters were governed by the essentializing effects of dehumanization whereby the figure of the migrant was streamlined, as either the idealized subject of solidarity or the demonized manifestation of threat. In both cases, the migrant-Other was constructed to symbolize need or illegality.

Chapter 5 further explored how the initial responses of solidarity and humanitarianism regressed into suspicion and defensiveness. To properly situate this deterioration, I espoused an understanding of solidarity as a fluid negotiation – a point in a continuum that delineates the relationship between the host society and the migratory populations. In the socio-political scenery of Greece in 2015, solidarity halted the waves of anti-migrant sentiment and dehumanization that emerged during the financial crisis in 2009 and continued to rise with the popularity of the Golden Dawn from 2011 to 2013. However, it was assessed that the solidarity reflexes of 2015 did not translate to solidarity as a political endeavor or imperative, but rather operated on a basis of pro quo interaction that did not disrupt the host-stranger dynamics. In this sense solidarity was only a fleeting moment in time. Fragile, 'liquid' and prone to abrupt change, solidarity remained anchored in its opposites: doubt and retraction. As the refugee 'crisis' extended in time, the movement towards the migrant-Other became tainted with skepticism. I suggested three successive conditions to be central in legitimizing a withering of the extension of solidarity. The first condition came with the uncertainty that accompanied the temporal prolongment of the refugee 'crisis'. From 2015-2016, the sensitive balance between scenarios of temporary or permanent migrant presence exacerbated the corrosive consequences of waiting for a resolution of the 'crisis'. The notion of corrosion reflects the temporal and existential dimensions of the delegitimizing of solidarity; the futility of waiting for a cessation of 'crisis' and a return to 'normality' functioned as a catalyst for the deterioration of positive sentiments towards the migrant-Other. Prompting a defensive pondering of what solidarity ultimately entails and who deserves it, this temporal contingency inevitably offered fertile ground for conditions of 'deservingness'. As a vicious sorting mechanism that made divisions between the acceptably helpless figure of the 'good' refugee and the malevolent 'economic immigrant', deservingness became a mechanism that predicated and foresaw its own stringency. The endgame of this division was to render newcomers as less 'worthy' of solidarity and help whilst exacerbating a 'fetishism of categories' (Apostolova, 2015) that remained ignorant to the demographic realities of those crossing the Greek borders. The retraction was

completed by the cultivation of fears of proximity. In a way, the demise of solidarity can be viewed as a running parallel with the progression from exception as comfort to exception as entrapment.

In this realm of entrapment, differential conditions for the extension of solidarity signaled a transition to an explicit will to cease symbolic and literal movement towards the approaching Other. Instead, a reversal of this approach was purported – the effort to put critical distance between what constitutes 'Greekness' and who can be excluded as 'Other'. Notably, between late 2015 and early 2016, the two counterbalancing movements were happening in tandem. However, after the EU-Turkey Declaration and the looming prospect of a permanent wave of migrants in Greek society, a renewed desire to outline the boundaries that separated the migrant-Other (as the one not simply *passing by* but actually *arriving*) from the host society was observed.

The narratives that attempted to articulate this critical distance were analyzed through the lens of nativism. Nativism was deemed suitable to the Greek context because it presented itself as an antithesis to solidarity – offering a metaphorical map that guides the exploration of how the solidarity movement of 2015 was gradually deconstructed and de-legitimized. In the aftermath of a migration influx, nativism followed every contextual nuance, every expansion and contraction of the ontological horizon, and of the meaning of (and distinction between) the 'native' and the 'non-native'. Namely, the withering of humanitarian sentiment was concurrent with a stretching of the category of the 'non-native' to include all those who are not deemed to be victimized enough to be classified as refugees. After 2015, the prerequisite of this distinction also entailed the targeting of those natives who were considered 'internal' enemies to Greekness. Pro-migrant SYRIZA politicians who espoused border policies that abstained from principles of deterrence and securitization were framed as traitors and accessories to the victimization of the country, whilst their 'anti-Greekness' was simultaneously utilized to delegitimize the solidarity reflexes of the early moments of the refugee 'crisis'. The prioritization and privileged position of the native was also threatened by the provision of material assistance, free housing, and healthcare to asylum seekers via several projects of UNHCR and other international organization. These provisions rekindled the stereotypical framing of migrants as financial burdens to the Greek taxpayers – a longstanding but spurious claim traditionally bolstered by the populist-right narratives. And even if the prioritization criterion would not prove enough, the essentializing argument of cultural incompatibility was employed to undermine any possibility for co-existence with the migrant-Other. In this sense,

the Greek case challenged the conceptualization of nativism as defensive. It was argued that the affective texture of anger and hostility was prevalent in the articulation of the nativist narratives. What was also challenged through an exploration of the Greek context was the alleged disregard to the element of superiority in the nativist arguments. I posited that in the nativist division – and in the construction of Greekness itself – the comparison frames the Greek culture as possessing a superior value. This alleged superiority was a rhetorical question left hanging – no satisfactory answer could be provided for the insistence of the native's material and symbolic prioritization.

7.2 The insecurity in othering: The legacy and the aftermath

Failing to answer this rhetorical question probes an uneasy reflection on the notions of distance and difference from the migrant-Other. It invites a deconstruction of an imagined superiority that is pivotal in answering the last of the sub-questions posed in the introduction of this thesis: how is the refugee 'crisis' migrant-Other different from the migrant-Others that came before? And, further, what legacy will this refugee 'crisis' leave for future relationships between the Greek society and the migrant-Other?

To articulate a response to these questions, it is valuable to refer to an appropriate series of events that took place a few months after the end of my fieldwork. In July 2019, a new round of national elections was held with the right wing 'New Democracy' party winning the absolute majority of parliamentary seats. Even before its election, New Democracy politicians had been very explicit on their agenda towards migration: control, deterrence, and the withdrawal of any (remaining) welfare provisions provided by the previous government to refugees and asylum seekers. On the one hand, this agenda reflected a political strategy to aggregate the populist electoral base and the populists leaning towards the far right, in light of Golden Dawn's demise. However, it was not only a discursive strategy but rather a deliberate political plan that quickly materialized. Within days the new government closed down the Ministry of Migration Policy and shifted the responsibility of migration governance to the Ministry of Citizens' Protection, the ministry responsible for public order and security. It was a resounding metaphor on behalf of New Democracy: migrants were to be handled politically as a nuisance or risk to order and security. This was only the first step on a wide array of events and decisions that showed clear political determination to deliver a final blow a governance inspired by extending solidarity to migrants. The issuing of social security numbers to migrants was suspended, measures were

taken to strengthen the sea and land border with Turkey, and the increase of migrant returns was announced (Cities of Refuge, 2019). Meanwhile, under the pretense of evacuating illegally occupied buildings in the anarchist neighborhood of Exarchia, and implementing a 'law and order' approach to any manifestation of social disorganization, numerous migrant families were deprived of their housing opportunities and often apprehended without any clear justification by the police (Efsyn, 2019).

Amidst this explicit turn to securitization, in the last days of February 2020 a new development re-animated the discourse of migration 'crisis' once again. Frustrated by a lack of European support, the Turkish President announced a plan to 'open the doors' for migrants to reach Europe – a cynical move to apply political pressure on European institutions, but also to deliberately instigate clashes with Greek border guards (New York Times, 2020a). By February 29, Greek riot police, border guards and even armed civilians violently confronted migrants at the border of Evros (De Genova, 2021). The use of tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets was reported, as well as the use of high-speed boats to potentially sink migrant vessels, whilst armed civilian patrols repeatedly attacked migrants, humanitarian workers and journalists, not hesitating to violently obstruct pregnant women or minors from disembarking dinghies and boats (New York Times, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). The fixation on borders was a legitimizing force that provided absolution from culpability for the violence exercised, with the Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis proclaiming that "The borders of Greece are the external borders of Europe. We will protect them" (New York Times, 2020b). Mitsotakis went on to preemptively legitimize any necropolitical practice by engaging in inflammatory discourse that capitalized on the long-standing nationalist sentiment against Turkey, announcing that the problem is "an asymmetric threat and illegal invasion of thousands of people that threatens our territory" (New York Times, 2020b). The coincidence of these events with the onset of a global pandemic encouraged a combination of the invasion discourse with the narrative of the migrant body as filthy, suspicious, and infectious.

These initial months of the New Democracy government invite some crucial observations about the ostensible legacy of the refugee 'crisis' of 2015. Namely, they underline how opportunities for constructing understandings of the Other represent a short and fleeting chapter in recent Greek history. Athanasiou (2007) has stipulated how biopower must be understood and desired, how it expects a consensual contribution from its subjects in order to be successfully implemented. The volatility manifested across the Greek land and sea borders in 2020 exemplifies how the consent of bio and necro-politics is considerably diffused throughout

Greek society. This diffusion was captured wisely by Cicciarello-Maher (2017:61) who posited how "for those relegated to non-being and condemned to invisibility, to even appear is a violent act – because it is violent to the structures of the world and because it will inevitably be treated as such". With State power promulgating the legitimization of othering and bordering practices there is not much prospect for humane treatment of migrants – much less for the establishing of a humanitarian and solidarian ethos.

With this in mind, what exactly initiated the transformation of images and reactions to the refugee 'crisis' between 2015 and 2020? A sharp contrast can be observed. In 2015, the world saw an inspiring image of three grandmothers feeding a baby that had just arrived in a boat. In 2020, enraged citizens in the port of Mytilene would not allow migrants to disembark from a boat. In video footage from the Mytilene port in March of 2020, some islanders can be seen passing water bottles to those in the boat – explicitly stating they were to be given to the children. A woman is proclaiming that "if they cannot build a wall in the sea, we will build one here". Someone mentions that there are pregnant women in the boat. A man screams in response: "It's not my fault you got knocked up, bitch". "I don't care if you are from Palestine or Afghanistan", he continues screaming. It is not, then, about whether or not the arriving individual is a 'refugee' or an 'economic immigrant'. The categories of deservedness are redundant – if they were ever anything more than justifications for exclusion. I would argue that the crucial point is not the arriving Other but the receiving host. What is subject to change is not so much the qualities of the migrant-Other but the literal and metaphorical position of the Self – in relation to the Other. So if there is a 'novelty' to be found in the framing of the migrant-Other of 2015, this novelty is to be found in the host society's **undesirable realization of an imagined but ultimately fragile and destabilized superiority.** The migratory influx of 2015 was the first of such numbers that occurred after the onset of austerity in 2009, and the 'peeling off' of layers that the economic crisis encouraged – layers of composure, patience, and humanity. It came after the politically turbulent decade beginning in 2010, with the uprise of racist violence and the normalization of dehumanizing discourse and action bolstered by Golden Dawn. That is why, as hinted in the introduction and the analysis that preceded, the refugee crisis was deemed to 'reset the clock'. Further, the distrust towards the European and national institutions alongside the anger and exhaustion brought about by pre-existing crises exacerbated feelings of precarity and the amplification of ontological insecurity. The encounter with the migrant-Other **was filtered through the degradation of the position of the Self** as a citizen and subject in the neoliberal capitalist framework, a subject ceaselessly forced to deal

with his own precarity and withering status (civil, economic, cultural, and existential). The encounter was pervaded by the critical pressure to face a comparison between the imagined collective Self and the Other.

In several discussions with key gatekeepers, especially those with many years of experience in the realm of migration politics or history, a common phrase was that the Greek society was suffering from a complex of 'superio-inferiority' - perpetually searching for someone to blame and feel victimized by. In this 'superio-inferiority' continuum, there was an Other to blame on either side - the Orient and the Occident. In this bizarre perception, a balance was struck by delineating the cultural enemies of the Greek society, both towards the East and the West, and by placing the imagined collective Self in the middle. Whilst a pariah of the European Union bitterly trying to prove its European-ness, there was always an abode in the (imagined) cultural and material superiority towards the immigrant-Other. The migration 'crisis' served as the most suitable platform for this tension of superior-inferiority to manifest upon because it came at a time when the Greek citizen had endured considerable material and symbolic devaluation, such that the myths about Greekness' superiority could no longer withstand the burden of insecurity engendered by the comparison to a new migrant-Other. Deprived of a solid basis, Greekness was searching for a shred of ontological certainty, and this certainty was to be found in the re-affirmation of boundaries of difference from (and, thus, in the rejection of) the migrant-Other.

Circling back to Cavafis' poem quoted at the beginning of this thesis, the 'barbarian'-Other not arriving constitutes an existential dead-end – an encounter expected but not realized. But even though the 'barbarians' arrived in 2015, did the encounter actually happen? I would argue that the encounter with the Other signifies a paradox, so loaded with anticipation, fears, and projections that it becomes impossible. If the Other arrives, the imagined Greekness is threatened by the possibility of comparison. And yet if the Other never shows up, Greekness has no Other as a mirror through which identity can be constructed as the opposite of. Almost two decades ago, Bauman (2004) noted how migrants embody the inarticulate yet hurtful and painful presentiment of the Self's disposability. "One is tempted to say that were there no immigrants knocking at the doors, they would have to be invented" (Bauman, 2004:56). Pondering a similar dilemma, Ahmed (2000:24) posited that the "very act through which the subject differentiates between others is the moment that the subject comes to inhabit or dwell in the world". These words carry a certain degree of pessimism but reflect the realities of human interaction. The encounter with the Other always amounts to an encounter with the Self – inevitably forcing the gaze inward. At the same time, these final thoughts inadvertently

indicate an imagination of a mode of co-existence beyond the persistent fear of the Other, and its recurring utilization as a political strategy of scapegoating and deflection employed by neoliberal forces. Even if it is accepted that the recognition of the Other is a moment constitutive to the subject, this does not mean that this differentiation should predicate hostility. Difference can be acknowledged as a fundamental parameter of the human condition and experience in a globalized, mobile world. The Other, who will eventually arrive, need not be the 'barbarian' of the poem. In other words, difference can be disentangled from notions of superiority and inferiority – a disentanglement that will actually allow for the realization of the inhumane and unfair character of the current border regime and maybe even prompt new debates about appropriate treatment of people on the move. For this endeavor however to have any chance of being successful, the prerequisite would be a serious acknowledgment and counteraction of the violence inherent in the consent of necropolitics. As European institutions and the Greek political establishment seem unwilling to refrain from treating the migrating subject as a commodity to be managed, controlled, blamed, or rejected, a willful, defensive ignorance towards the potential benefits of interacting with the migrant Other will continue to breed confusion and fear; and a constructive re-evaluation of the concept of otherness will be crucially impeded.

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Appendix I – List of respondents

Code Name	Capacity	Interview	Location
R1	Lawyer – NGO employee	180’ (two unrecorded sessions)	Athens, Skype
R2	Lawyer – Former Asylum service executive	180’ (two recorded sessions)	Athens
R3	Researcher	60’ (one unrecorded session)	Skype
R4	Lawyer – NGO employee	180’ (two recorded sessions)	Skype, Athens
R5	Politician - Academic	180’ (one recorded, one non-recorded session)	Skype
R6	Social worker – NGO employee	90’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R7	Academic	180’ unrecorded session	Athens
R8	Advocacy officer – NGO employee	80’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R9	Lawyer - UNHRC employee	100’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R10	Social worker – NGO employee	75’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R11	Lawyer – former NGO employee	120’ (two recorded sessions)	Skype
R12	Lawyer – former anti-racist organization executive	130’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R13/CR1	Migrant community representative	120’ (one recorded session)	Athens

R14/NGO7	Lawyer -NGO executive	90’ (two recorded session)	Skype
R15	Journalist	120’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R16	Civil society actor/Activist	80’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R17	Lawyer – NGO Employee	90’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R18	IOM employee	70’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R19	IOM employee	120’ (one un-recorded session)	Athens
R20	Journalist	40’ (one unrecorded session)	Athens
R21	Journalist	130’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R22	Former Municipality employee	190’ (two recorded sessions)	Athens
R23	Politician - Parliamentarian	70’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R24	Political party representative	240’ (one recorded, two unrecorded sessions)	Athens
R25	NGO executive	80’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R26	Legal expert	90’ (one unrecorded session)	Athens
R27	Advocacy officer	100’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R28	Journalist	75’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R29	Migrant community representative	80’ (one recorded session)	Athens

R30	Asylum service employee	60’ (one unrecorded session)	Athens
R31	Lawyer	70’ (one recorded session)	Athens
R32	MSF employee	60’(one recorded session)	Athens
R33	Political party representative	90’(one recorded session)	Athens
R34	Politician, former parliamentarian	85’(one recorded session)	Athens
R35	Journalist	70’(one unrecorded session)	Athens
R36	Migrant community representative	75’(one unrecorded session)	Athens
R37	Researcher - Academic	110’ (One recorded session	Athens
R38	Lawyer - Activist	75’ (One recorded session)	Athens
R39	Researcher - Academic	45’ (One unrecorded session)	Skype
R40	Researcher - Academic	110’ (one unrecorded session)	Athens
R41	Asylum Service executive	100’ (One recorded session)	Athens
R42	Journalist	80’ (One recorded session)	Athens
R43	Civil society organization Executive	Email Interview	-
R44	Academic - Activist	90’ (one unrecorded session)	Skype
R45	Academic	75’ (one recorded session)	Athens

Appendix II. Legislation and policy texts analysed

European Commission (2015) *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A European Agenda on Migration* COM (2015) 240 final *https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf*

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Appendix III. Curriculum Vitae

Vassilis Gerasopoulos is a PhD candidate and a lecturer at the Willem Pompe Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology at the University of Utrecht. He holds a Bachelor in Law from the University of Athens and an MA in Global Criminology from Utrecht University (cum laude). For his MA Thesis, he conducted ethnographic research on the processes of labeling and homophobia against young Greek gay men within their family. His doctoral research focuses on how the migration 'crisis' of 2015 reconfigured and produced the figure of the migrant as the cultural 'Other' in the Greek context. He is chiefly interested in the concepts of fear and exclusion – in racial, sexual or cultural terms - and in exploring how and why various fears are constructed and expressed. During his PhD trajectory, he has participated in several workshops on qualitative methodology, discourse analysis and migration research. Alongside his PhD research, he is also been granted funding to organize (teaching) projects regarding the dominant representations of crime, migration, sexuality and gender as well as the intersection between criminology and queer studies. He has published articles on the recent refugee crisis in Greece, the contemporary modalities of racism in the country, and the intersection of deviance and popular culture.

Key Publications & Presentations:

2021 – Oral presentation

Gerasopoulos, V. (13-09-2021) Speaker at European Society of Criminology 'The Malleable and Inevitable Path of Demonizing (Sub) Culture: The Case of Greek Rebetiko”

2021 – Volumes/Chapters

Gerasopoulos, V. (2021). The Malleable and Inevitable Path of Demonizing (Sub) Culture: The Case of Greek Rebetiko. In D. Siegel & F. Bovenkerk (eds.) Crime and Music (pp. 247-269).

Springer

Gerasopoulos, V. (2021) The lockdown and the crackdown: Controlling the responsibilized body during a pandemic. In D. Siegel (ed.) Notes from Isolation Global Criminological Perspectives on Coronavirus Pandemic. The Hague: Eleven International Publishing

2019 - Oral presentation

Gerasopoulos, V. (21-09-2019) Speaker European Society of Criminology, Ghent. “Exploring the interactions between queer and cultural criminology”

Gerasopoulos, V. (19-09-2019) Speaker European Society of Criminology, Ghent. ‘Nationalism & Xenophobia in Greek social media: Particularities of articulation and validity’

2018 - Articles

Gerasopoulos, V. & Drymioti, M. (2018). Entangling the Migration and the Economic 'Crisis': Claiming What's Rightfully Greek . Etnofoor , 30 (2), (pp. 49-70) (22 p.).

Gerasopoulos, V. (2018). Sense8: Aspiring for a different story about difference . MAI: Feminism (2), (pp. 1-22) (21 pp.).

2018 - Volumes / Chapters

Gerasopoulos, V. (2018). Countering 'Crisis' - Identifying the Components of the Refugee Crisis in Greece . In Dina Siegel & Veronica Nagy (Eds.), The Migration Crisis? Criminalization, Security and Survival (pp. 265-292) (27 p.). Eleven.

2018 - Oral presentation

Gerasopoulos, V. (22-11-2018) Invited speaker Regulation and Enforcement in the EU: Challenges, Trends and Prospects A crisis of policy and management: The localization of the EU migration policies: The case of Greece

Gerasopoulos, V. (07-05-2018) Invited speaker Internatıonal Migration Conference: EU at the crossroads of migration Utrecht Countering Crisis: The ramifications of the refugee 'crisis' narratives in Greece

Gerasopoulos, V. (28-07-2018) Speaker DCGC Conference 'Global Issues, Cultural Perspectives' Utrecht Sense8: Aspiring for a 'different story about difference'