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CAMPS AS BUFFER ZONES AND THE SHORT ROAD FROM 'UNCONDITIONAL HOSPITALITY' TO 'HOSTILITY': A REPORT FROM THE GREEK ISLAND OF CHIOS

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Abstract

I explore the temporal aspects of transformations of 'hospitality' towards refugees in the Greek island of Chios starting from the summer of 2015, the peak of the so called 'refugee crisis'. Drawing from fieldwork among locals and refugees, members of NGOs and from relevant representations in local journals, my attempt is to problematize the reactions of locals towards refugees/migrants. I interrogate the escalation of these negative reactions towards the newcomers as they realized the longevity of the camps. In this respect, I challenge romanticized approaches emphasizing either an essentialized positive notion of 'Greek hospitality' and an equally stereotypical understanding of Greek hostility towards refugees. I introduce certain considerations over governmentality associated with the deterioration of everyday life of the locals in the long run in parallel with the long detention of refugees in the camps, the inhuman conditions of their encampment and the restraints of their future life prospects. More specifically, I shall examine and theorize under what circumstances the 'unconditional hospitality' of locals during the summer of 2015 was gradually turned to fear and/or hostility towards newcomers.

Keywords

Forced migration, camps, hospitality, buffer zones, borders

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1. The welcome of the locals in the summer of 2015 and how ‘hot spot’ detention changed this later

When we look closely at the reactions of the local people in the island of Chios, temporality and detention policies becomes critical issues in our attempt to understand the reaction of islanders vis-à-vis the presence of refugees in the island. Locals remember very well and discuss their efforts to meet with the situation of emergency, during the culmination of unexpected arrivals in the summer and the autumn of 2015. Given the blatant absence of state structures and services to respond in this condition of emergency and that it took a few months to state authorities and to national and international NGOs and humanitarian organizations to be settled in the island and to undertake action, the assistance of the locals was massive and generous. Acting mainly as members of associations of the most diverse kind, including trade unions, professional associations, the Orthodox Church, political activists and representatives of businesses and cultural associations, the locals struggled to meet the material and non-material needs of the newcomers. Even distinct individuals or families would visit the refugees settled provisionally under the tents in the public park of the town of Chios, bringing water, cloths and food cooked in their own kitchen, or materials bought from shops for this aim.

A local retired female teacher, who used to volunteer with her group, taking care and entertaining refugee children at pre-school age, stressed that,

There was a spirit of contribution and solidarity, I would say a kind competition between locals of who would offer more. You could see a car loaded with bottles of water or food to enter the park to upload its staff and to leave without any further procedures and without to let us know who was. Or you could see an old woman bringing milk and cooked food in her kitchen for the children. It was amazing and moving to see all these reactions of locals despite their own difficulties in the middle of economic crisis and their other divisions and ideological orientations and priorities.

Nevertheless, all these positive attitudes and the spirit of solidarity with the refugees was progressively

moderated and wiped out over time. There are several factors of this negative development. Locals progressively lost their enthusiasm for hospitality as they appeared reluctant to accept that the presence of the newcomers was not as provisional, as they had initially thought, but as Diken would had put it, the camps were transformed to ‘permanent spaces of transience’ (Diken 2004, 93).

The closure of the ‘Balkan route’ in March of 2016 and the EU – Turkey Agreement, turned Chios and other Aegean islands to ‘buffer zones’ and places of detainment as the movement towards mainland Greece was prohibited and the islands ceased to operate as transit passages. The establishment of Souda, as a Structure of Hospitality (Domi Filoxenias), and VIAL as a Centre of Reception and Identification (KYT) in the town of Chios were not welcomed by the residents of the small town, especially when it became clear that these were not provisional structures, although they were planned as transit structures. Reports of the local media for the life in the camps and acts of misbehaviour of young refugees against women, most often exaggerated, contributed to the development of negative sentiments among the locals. A woman in her 50s, very active in the cultural life of the town, who in the recent past was supporting ethically and materially the newcomers pointed out that “the sentiment of security was lost in the small town, I am not a racist but for first time in my life, I need somebody to accompany me the night to get my car from the parking, or to go somewhere alone ... this is very annoying, Chios is not the same any more ...”.

It is also important to note that despite the fact that Soudas’ location has been considered problematic due to its close proximity with the residential area of the town, the municipal authorities boycotted all attempts to ensure an alternative site for developing a camp, or to suggest one away from the town. Even Church’s authorities were actively involved in order to impede the establishment of another camp into a Church’s property. By this way, the attempt of the Ministry of Immigration to arrange a shelter into the property of a Monastery failed due to the intervention of influential locals campaigning against the enduring presence of refugees in the island. They reacted negatively in order to exercise pressure to the central government to relocate the refugees in mainland Greece.

This, provoked tension between the Ministry and the local authorities of the island, each side accusing the other for the deterioration of the living conditions in the camps. Municipal authorities campaigned against central government for maintaining an open camp 'in the middle of a residential area, with many delinquency issues', placing the newcomers into the position of 'unwanted' and providing a space for policing the so-called 'refugee crisis'.



Pic 1. A view of the camp of VIAL

As Hannah Arendt has argued on 1951, "stateless people were as convinced as the minorities that the loss of national rights was identical with loss of human rights, that the former inevitably entailed the latter" (Arendt 1951, 289) and that the nation-state, unable to provide protection for stateless persons, put the problem in the hands of the police (*ibid.*). Indeed, as more recent approaches on borders foreground, strict border policies supported by police controls, in the name of securitization of the nation, criminalize the 'non-citizens' struggling for their survival contributing to the dark zone of the dehumanization and thanotopolitics

(Tsimouris and Moore 2017; Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris 2018). Further, what has been called uncritically 'refugee crisis' is the consequence of "the performative production of those who belong and those who don't" (Cantat and Rajaram 2018, 13) and the accentuation of the divide between them. Further, I shall explain later, this policy orientation contributes to what Khosravi calls "evidence of border-necropolitics" (Khosravi 2014, 330).

2. The 'unhomliness' of the Camps

How to speak of those in quest of safe harbor and unconditional hospitality without demeaning and excluding them? Perhaps the answer lies in retranslating the word "citizen," such that "citizen" signals the person who deprives others of the right to have rights! And whose own precarity is masked by a state power claiming to secure his safety of the person.¹

There are good reasons for the popularization of Agamben's approach on camps (Agamben 1998), perceived as spaces which reduce political life to *bare life* as their dwellers are invisible as citizens and visible only as abject(s), as lives deprived of any political rights since they could be killed without any further sanctions for the murderer. The work of Agamben was criticized on the grounds of overgeneralizing the life of the camps. Walters pointed out that "Agamben's line of thinking seems to lead us away from a dynamic, agonistic account of power relations, and instead fosters a rather one-sided and flattened conception of migrant subjects." (Walters 2008, 187) and De Genova argued that "Agamben's thought has entailed a certain inflation and consequent devaluation" (De Genova 2010). Likewise, Agamben's view that camps were extraterritorial zones undermining European liberal democracies, based on his concept of the state of exception, was also criticised (Levy 2010, 92).

However, I maintain that Agamben's thought provides us with a rigorous theoretical framework that

1. The Sovereign is he who Translates: An Interview with Emily Apter, by Krishnan Unni P and Mantra Mukim in, <https://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/the-sovereign-is-he-who-translates-an-interview-with-emily-apter/?fbclid=IwAR0EQpPJooGMDDED7k5GXmMOjui-3kORy9SzR3w9VbIbdv3jcUAuUkCRNGvU>

ethnographic accounts should come to terms constructively in order to make sense of the cultural and political specificities of the camps around the world. Inevitably, camps are places that impose immobilization, confinement and restriction of freedom increasing the evident divide between citizens and non-citizens or between political subject and abject bodies. This is not to say that, those enclosed cease to exercise their agency, refugees are not just victims without voice (Malkki 1996), but rather that the space of their agency is significantly constrained, undermined and shocked, a condition that might make possible the negation of their lives by other or by themselves, expanding the regime of ‘border necro-politics’.

I visited both camps VIAL and Souda on several occasions. The persons I already knew there were ex-students working in NGOs and they did my access easier than I had initially thought. Both places reminded me the military camps I lived as soldier in the Greek Army for some 21 months back in the early 80s. My first negative impression, that came to be endorsed later, urged me to reflect how tough was for someone to live in there. Both places were inhospitable, as the containers of VIAL and the tents of Souda were fully exposed in the intense sun of the Greek summer and in the cold of the severe winter. In Souda, a camp established in the residential area close to the port of the small town, some of the tents were set up by the sea and when the wind was very strong the dwellers were compelled to look for another shelter in the mid of the night as the weaves were reaching them. As the settlement was established into a site of archaeological interest, any vital interventions was strongly prohibited. This partly explains why there was no provision of heating facilities for some of the tents, especially those addressed to young Algerians, Egyptians or Iranians. Apart from Syrians, all others were faced as unregular migrants and therefore not vulnerable enough or as having the credentials to be entitled with asylum. On several occasions I realized that an Orientalist hierarchy was applied in the camps by administrators and NGOs that was complemented by criteria of vulnerability vis-à-vis the ‘beneficiaries’, as were labelled. As Agier has put it “Inside the camps, the category of ‘refugee’ is itself divided into several

distinct subcategories of “vulnerability,” which end up creating a hierarchy of misery” (Agier 2012, 39).

VIAL, an abandoned factory some 6 kilometres away from the town of Chios and quite close to Halkeios, a small village, was constructed to host some 1.100 persons, but the average number of its residents was 1500 – 1600 persons and during peak periods were packed some 2.000 persons. During my initial visit, a hot day of the August 2016, I’ve observed signs of violence exercised here and there, damaged containers and materials provided by UNCHR and NGOs. ‘It is a hard to live in here as more families were packed in the same container and this contributed significantly in the uneasiness of refugees, explained to me my guide, a young woman working for a certain NGO organization.

At the end of our tour we visited a large hole at the edge of the camp opened by bulldozers. It was full of rubbishes and a few kids were playing with boxes and stuff collected from the rubbish. Despite of multiple other signs of violence this image of children playing in this eerie place haunted me for long and came again and again to my mind, as it motivated me to reflect on the future of these kids.

All these images and what I’ve read in local journals, drives me to argue that camps are inherently ‘unheimlich’ (Cullen and Demant 2018, 21) places in the words of Cullen Dunn and Demant Frederiksen “that visitors immediately perceive and which the inhabitants of camps often complain about” (Diken 2004; Cullen and Demant 2018, 21). As they explain ‘unheimlich’ may understood “both in the sense of being uncanny or creepy, and in the sense of being unhomey or ‘un-cosy’” (*ibidem*). Both senses were evident in the camps of Chios due to both their transitory purpose - not to become a home ever - and to the militarized regulations of their organization and operation. Especially VIAL, isolated from the town and unwanted by the residents of Halkios, the near-by village whose inhabitants undertook action against the further presence of the camp, turned to become a dystopic place. How else could we come to terms with a place undesired not only from its ‘sans papier’ residents but also from the employees, the members of NGOs and the neighbouring locals? As my guide trusted to me ‘I can’t bear this work environment for long, although I



Pic 2 Protest of o locals against the expansion of VIAL

get a decent wage, I can't bear so much suffering'. Indeed, a few months after my visit she resigned. Apart from the immanent unhomeliness of the camp, addressed to a large, unwanted population in transit, the long delays in the examination of asylum applications, the deficiencies in material and psychological services and the classification of the displaced according to an Orientalist hierarchy and criteria of vulnerability for the examination of their asylum application, my point is that camps are not places 'to be but rather, places 'not to be'.

3. Inside of the vulnerable camp: Waiting and (dis)order after surviving in the Mediterranean

A Syrian refugee is in critical condition after what appeared to be a self-immolation attempt on the Greek island of Chios, according to medical sources.²

2. *Chios: Syrian refugee critical after 'self-immolation'* *Man*, 29, sustains burns to 85 percent of his body after incident inside the Vial centre on the Greek island of Chios, by Teo Kermeliotis In, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/syrian-refugee-critical-immolation-chios-170330142455924.html>

When the body is confined, and its movement has been forcefully stopped, the mind explodes; the self-explodes; identity explodes (Avramopoulou 2019).

News like this, or other reporting lethal conflicts in the camp between Iraqis and Palestinians or between other ethnic groups or incidents of sexual exploitation of unaccompanied minors was rather ordinary. Another subject of local news was the attempts undertaken by locals and municipality authorities to close the camps or that the villagers of the close-by village Halkeios blocked the road driving to VIAL in order to impede the transport and settlement of more containers for the enlargement of the camp. In one incident a local farmer shot in the air with his hunting gun, as 6 refugees from the age of 13 to 45 tried to steal vegetables from his greenhouse. Complaints among refugees for their living conditions, for the food and especially for the long waiting periods was also part of the daily routine.

Calendar time does not coincide with the ways in which people live their daily lives in the camp. This is perfectly conceptualized in the form of 'structural time' as opposed to the 'calendar' time and it is eloquently materialized in Dali's representations of stretched watches reminding us that time might be

stuck, frozen or accelerated. My point is that the more confined, miserable and routinized is one's life in the camp and the less s/he is able planning her near future or just her next day the more the time is halted and arguably takes the form of a 'monster time'. Khoshravi captures this eloquently when he, drawing from Bourdieu argues that, "Making people wait... delaying without destroying hope is part of the domination" (Khoshravi 2014, 74) and that waiting has a 'punitive' aspect especially when one is 'kept ignorant as to how long he must wait' (Schwartz 1975; Khoshravi 2014, 74). In similar way Avramopoulou elaborates the situation of 'being-in-waiting' as intrinsic among displaced populations clarifying that urgency and crisis is not about acceleration of time but also "when nothing happens, or when someone experiences the "stuckness" of waiting (Hage 2009; Avramopoulou 2019), as well as the affective state of delirium, frustration and revolt that might accompany it.

A period of 5-7 months was as an average waiting period from the day of arrival in the island to the day of granting asylum or receiving a negative final response. This period depended upon the numbers of arrivals and the pressure over the structures of access. The waiting period might be less for vulnerable groups, such as persons with serious health problems, unaccompanied minors, single-parent families and unaccompanied women, although it was quite rare for women to travel alone. For Syrian women, single-parents, homosexuals, pregnant women the waiting period was usually 2-3 months or less in the period of fieldwork (January - February 2017) that the number of new arrivals was limited. For young men, Syrian or other, who travel alone and not as members of families the waiting period before the full examination of their application would be extended to one year. In mid-February 2017 I met a young Syrian man who had applied for asylum in March 2016. While his application has been prioritized due to psychiatric health symptoms, his first application as a vulnerable person was initially turn down and his application for asylum was accepted only in mid-February 2017.

As pregnant women were included in the vulnerable groups and they were given priority for the consideration of their asylum applications, some women got pregnant for that reason. Consequently, the Asylum

authorities ceased to take at face value pregnancy as a mark of vulnerability. For quite similar reasons, the authorities of the camps were mistrusting refugees, a condition quite common among other groups in these occasions as Daniel and Knudsen have developed (Daniel and Knudsen 1995). According to locals and to volunteers, the long waiting period, the uncertainty under hard conditions of residence made life unbearable in the camps of Chios. Further, the bad quality of food and food shortages especially milk for babies, were adding to discontent.

It should be noted that mistrust, the miseries and the deprivations of the camp followed the hazardous itinerary before to reach Chios' shores. The trajectory between the countries of origin and Greece varied significantly depending on the country of origin, the date of departure in relation to intensification of controls in the borders, the money that one was able to spend in order to speed up his or her travel or to make it more secure. "The more one was able to spend the faster would cross the maritime borders to reach a Greek island" a young man from Syria clarified. According to certain oral accounts, certain refugees stayed in Turkey to work, in order to subsidize their travel expenses. This turned to be a hard experience as they were not able to speak Turkish and the payments in Turkey were trivial. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that refugees were ready to undergo all the trials in their attempt to reach Greece as a transit country and to find their final way to Europe. Their desperate struggle to move away from war and 'desert lands' was also certified by journalist accounts.

According to German journal *Der Spiegel* and the German National Broadcast Network ARD, a Syrian refugee in Turkey declared that, "I am in great troubles in Turkey and I live under pressure. I have no other way to find money but to sell my body parts. I don't know the Turkish language and I can't find a job here"³. "During early 2017 the usual price to be paid to a trafficker in order to cross the Aegean Sea was 400-500 euros but the amount could be much higher

3. Είμαι σε μεγάλες δυσκολίες στην Τουρκία και μένο υπό πίεσι. Δεν έχω άλλο τρόπο να βρω χρήματα allá να πουλήσω τα μέρη του σώματός μου. Δεν γνωρίζω την τουρκική γλώσσα και δεν μπορώ να βρω δουλειά εδώ ». Stamatopoulou, M. in <http://news.in.gr/features/article/?aid=1500130751>



Pic 3. A view of the camp of Souda.

for people seeking safer travel conditions. A 35-year-old pharmacist from Aleppo, Syria, reported that he paid 2,000 euros just to cross the sea and some 6,000 euros overall were his expenses from the day he departed from his hometown in Syria. His travel lasted one month but he had attempted twice to cross the borders from Syria to Turkey without success as he has been pushed back to Syria after being caught by Turkish Border Police. Normally, other refugees from Syria, would stay less than a month in order to disembark in the shores of an Aegean island. People arriving in the island were already exhausted and some of them with no money left as they were all spent to finance their trip. Looking them to embrace each other and to cry at the moment they were disembarking in the island, I doubt if they could imagine the endurance of their ordeals.

All these dehumanizing experiences provided a fertile space for the outbreak of violence of all kinds, such as both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic violence, self-destructive action, as well as domestic violence. Two murders were reported, one in Souda where an Egyptian man stabbed another Egyptian, and one in VIAL, where an Egyptian man lost his life after fighting with a man from Syria. Another man from Syria put himself to fire, protesting for the inhuman condi-

tions in VIAL. In other occasions, conflicts broke up between men from Syria with men from Afghanistan. Algerians and Moroccans were classified by Syrians as troublemakers and drug users. Several volunteers and members of NGOs argued that they had high percentage of delinquency including drug trafficking and some petty attacks to local shops.

A Syrian man argued that "they make troubles all the time and they are drunkards and drug users. They provoke trouble in the town, they are stealing shops and the locals don't want to see us, they think we are all the same. Greek police would have done something about all these, but policemen just observe them fighting. I don't want to be identified with them". Several rapes of unaccompanied youngsters both female and male and sexual abuse of minors were also reported. According to a volunteer, these took place predominantly within a familial environment and she went on to explain, that this was the result of packing in the same container extensive families or even people unknown among themselves.

Another member of a certain NGO with long experience, stressed that,

There are significant deficiencies at all levels of reception and protection of asylum seekers and

non-documented immigrants especially with regard the staff of identification and the documentation procedures. While the number of personnel allocated for VIAL by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administrative Reconstruction, was 160 persons, they were not properly trained, so they were totally incompetent to handle the issues arisen in the camps as they were acting as drained bureaucrats”.

Both members of NGOs and refugees stressed the urgent need for more places in the receptions centres in order to ensure better living conditions.

The two reception centres, ‘VIAL’ and ‘Souda’ were often crowded as too many persons were forced to share the same space, a UNCHR tent in Souda or a container in VIAL. A small number of toilets in Souda were serving to an average of 600 – 800 persons and there was also shortage of hot water. During the hard winter of 2017, certain among the refugees were living without access to electricity and heating. Some of the tents, were set up only a few metres from the sea and they were evacuated when the wind was blowing pitilessly, and the waves reached them. Especially young men from Morocco, Algeria, Africa and Afghanistan were most neglected with regard of the scarce facilities provided. It is important to note that at least two young members of NGOs, expressed their aporia on how they could survive under these hard conditions for so long. “They must be very strong people” concluded one of them, meaning that ‘they are radically alter in relation to us’.

VIAL, operated as a ‘police run’ identification centre (KYT)⁴ with a very limited number of Asylum Services employees in the beginning. The employees were untrained and inadequate to deal with the reception of broad and mixed migration flows, to deal with the specificities of each one and to initiate transfers in other locations particularly in times of intensification of arrivals. Interethnic violence may be seen as the result of hard living conditions in both camps, the long period of detention and the diverse treatment of different ethnic groups by state authorities and presumably by NGOs. As a consequence, 2 refugees from Egypt stole a motorboat from Chios and attempted to

return to back Turkey but they have been caught by FRONTEX authorities and were returned back in the island as detainees.

Both locals and certain members of NGO believed that the life in the reception centres was not improved by involved authorities on purpose so as to make the island of Chios a very un hospitable place and discourage more arrivals from Turkey. In general, young men without family were complaining as they were provided with less facilities and some of them were living in tents without electricity and heating. As a young woman working in Souda camp told me, “I don’t remember any Algerian or Moroccan to be proceeded in Athens as a result of positive answer of his application form at the first stage”. Complaining about this condition a young Syrian argued that, “I left back in Aleppo my wife and my 7 years old young son because we could not afford to travel altogether. They are living in the middle of war and I am very anxious about them. If they were around with me, it would be much better. Despite this I am treated here as having less needs in relation to families ... however, unlike me, parents have their kids around”.

One could conclude with Rygiel that “that camps reproduce orientalist mappings of the world that deem some people incapable or unworthy of citizenship” (Rygiel 2012, 807). In addition, the issue of vulnerability in the question of who was a ‘deserving refugee’ was decisive for one to ensure her status of protection. Not surprisingly, humanitarian criteria were prevailing for these decisions over individual, documented life stories of those coming from less ‘compatible’ cultures with Europe. It was a common truth among social workers and members of NGOs that for those coming from other countries than Syria it was rather improbable to be recognized as refugees. Greece, as other countries of Europe’s South, implemented European policies of detention to deal with increasing migratory pressures. Policies of ‘buffer zones’ pushed a broad number of people into a dark zone of existence, shaped by hopelessness, precarity and self-destruction. The traumatic experience of the camp was added to previous traumas of displacement and structural violence not in a repetitive manner but rather in palimpsest form in which “experiences of war, asylum, and

4. Detainment and Identification Centre.

exile haunting the past and present" (Avramopoulou 2019, 1) of the 'wretched of the earth'.

4. Humanitarianism and the practices of policing the borders of the neoliberal state

The state's withdrawal from key functions at the border – including for provisions of basic humanitarian relief, opens up a "market" in which actors compete for the sympathy, trust, and funds from public as well as private donors. In doing this, groups of various kinds ... [rely] also on consumerist forms of humanitarianism (and even solidarity work) that reinforce neo-liberal logics. The theatrics of disaster, again, clearly play an important role in such processes – and the fact that refugees arrived to beaches in overcrowded rubber dinghies here provided an almost unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on real human drama (Franck 2018, 204).

Apart from the administrators and the employees, a great deal of humanitarian organizations was operating in the two camps. These included globally known organizations such as UNHCR and the Doctors Without Borders but also nationally operating NGOs such as Praxis, MetAction, ARSIS, volunteers and employees of the local municipal authority. Journalists and researchers were also present quite often in the camps.

The strategy of outsourcing EU resources for humanitarian aid and the 'marketing' of services that should be provided by state institutions multiplied the bodies of operation in the camps without improving significantly the conditions of living. Nevertheless, the multiplicity of organizations was bringing up continuously management issues. Consequently, the heterogeneity of these bodies provoked a Babylon in terms of management and gave rise to intense complaints on behalf of dwellers. In the words of a young woman working for local municipal authorities, "everybody is responsible in here so nobody is really responsible ... when a refugee has a demand, even a modest one, such as one more blanket, he needs to navigate among various bodies without success ... it's quite common for administrators to address an asylum seeker to UNCHR and vice versa so as to be

informed for the process of his application without success". Antagonism between humanitarian authorities around their performance in the camp in order to meet the criteria of their founding bodies and the tension over the management of limited space contributed to the endurance of refugee anguish and the feeling of detainment and displacement (Kandyliis 2019, 8) that had nothing to do with Derrida's inspiration of unconditional hospitality.

A domain in which the involvement of the Greek state was as discrete and detached as possible was the security of refugees in the camp both by external violence but also from interethnic violence in the camp. While a few policemen existed in both camps their attitude of detachment and neutrality, appeared to be critical in moments of danger that were expected to occur, due to extreme pressure and the overall dehumanizing living conditions.

The violence that broke among different ethnic groups but also against NGOs contributed also in the uneasiness and in the animosity of the residents of the small town. In one of these outbursts of violence in VIAL, young refugees attacked and burnt 6 containers of NGOs including the container of Doctors Without Borders and the container of UNCHR. The container of the EASO (European Asylum Support Office) was attacked by a group of Syrian refugees. As state authorities were insufficient in both first reception centres to deal with this type of emergencies, NGOs were faced by refugees as the representatives of the state power responsible for their detention and grief. The refugees tried to detain in the camp, the administration staff and the members of NGOs. Only after the intervention of a troupe of Greek Riot Police (MAT) the episodes came to an end.

At another occasion, a clash between right wing locals and refugees broke up also in Souda, the night of the 17th of November of 2016. The previous days, a small group of refugees stole fireworks from a shop in the town. According to reports of NGOs working in Souda, some of the local attackers were identified to be members of the Nazi organisation, Golden Dawn. As the residential area is located at higher level in relation to the camp, they have thrown big stones and Molotov cocktails against the refugees attacking families with small children burning the tents they were

living in. Therefore, many immigrants left the camp and they preferred to sleep at open air areas many days after this incident despite the attempts by NGOs and UNCR representatives to change their minds and to settle them again in the camp. The next days, refugees hanged a large poster clarifying that,

We protest as humanist and peace-loving people. We do not agree nor belong to refugees who do not respect European laws and quarrel, put fire, steal and attack others. At the same time, we disagree with the locals who attacked refugees with large stones and fire. We do love Greek and European people and appreciate deeply their kind assistance and support. We demand to become distinct from criminals and to reconcile with the Greek people”⁵

It is important to note that in this occasion the action of Golden Dawn was marginalized in the local media and the conflict was epitomised as a clash initiated by young, non-documented immigrants, end was expanded latter as a fight between locals and refugees. In general, local newspapers and media were against the extension of residence of refugees in the island, propagating the dissemination of newcomers across mainland Greece.

In the same spirit, during my trip in Chios in the end of January, there was a call for a public gathering by the “Committee of Struggle of Chios Island”. According to certain of my local interlocutors, Committee’s front line was formed mainly by activists of the conservative party including also supporters from other political parties. However, the backstage of the group was formed by the local leaders of Golden Dawn. The invited speaker for this event, was S. a University Professor, who was activated in New Democracy, the conservative party, and K. another political activist well-known for his past in the Left and for his current strong and essentialist nationalist ideas. Among other matters the speakers emphasized that Greece accepted too many refugees because did

5. «Diamartyrómaste os anthropistés kai filísychoi ánthropoi. Den symfonoúme oúte aníkoume stous prósfyges pou den sévontai tous evropaikoús nómous kai tsakónontai, vázoun fotiés, klévoun kai epitíthentai se állois. Tin ídia óra diafonoúme me tous ntópious pou epitéthikan se prósfyges me megáles pétres kai fotiés. Ostóso agápame ton ellinikó kai evropaiκό laó kai ektimoúme vathýtata tin evgenikí voítheia kai ypostírixi tous. Apaitoúme na diachoristoúme apó tous enklimatíes kai na symfiliothoúme me ton ellinikó laó»

not adopted strict immigration policies and that refugees should be relocated in mainland Greece and from there in Europe. Furthermore, K. brought up ‘the Moslem danger’ as a result of so many arrivals. They also addressed to the government and to local authorities of the island demanding long term solutions and the immediate relocation of existing refugees.

Making an account of this situation, I argue that the EU and Greek emphasis in policing the border together with humanist treatment of the persecuted in the form of outsourcing and marketing of humanitarian action by multiple national and international bodies certain among them funded by European sources, contributed significantly in devaluing and dehumanizing the lives of the displaced, turning them into suffering, vulnerable, ‘bare lives’. Vulnerability, a humanitarian principle as such, brings forcefully into play national, oriental and religious stereotypes and draws from a domestic version of ‘Islamophobia’ (Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris 2018). This policy of humanitarian government may be seen, as complementary to the militarized interventions ‘somewhere else’ that is the cause of the displacement of non-European others.

This is perfectly summarised by Agier when he argues on European military action in relation to humanitarian practices. “Striking with one hand, healing with the other” (Agier 2012, 30). In the words of Agamben, here again, “power is seeking not to impose order but to govern through disorder”⁶. The polyphony or the cacophony of multiple and diverse organizations in the humanitarian field contributes to the disorder that Agamben speaks out. In a similar vein Agier contends that, “it has become necessary to question the humanitarian apparatus as a contemporary system of government and power, where control and assistance are entangled” (Agier 2012, 43).

5. Concluding remarks: Buffer zones and the conditions of ‘unconditional hospitality’.

Derrida’s approach is at the center of debates regarding hospitality in general and it is activated in the field of migration studies. For Derrida hospitality is present

6. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1GhNSw8_b8

in all cultures and, in his own words, "All the ethics of hospitality are not the same, no doubt, but there is no culture neither social bond without a principle of hospitality. This one commands, it even gives to desire a reception without reserve and without calculation, a limitless exposure to the arrival"⁷. Derrida goes further to argue the 'the law of unlimited hospitality' commands "to give the new arrival all of one's home and oneself, to give him or her one's own, our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfilment of even the smallest condition (Derrida 2000, 77).

Derrida's philosophical approach is opening a utopian space allowing us to be identified with 'the newcomer' and presumably, with her/his hopes and expectations to be treated as generously as possible. In this respect, philosopher's approach calls us to expand our understanding and to empathise with the suffering 'other'. Nevertheless, it seems that the more we distance ourselves from this utopian theoretical understanding of hospitality to the field of real-life contexts and to current policies applied to the displaced, the less it seems to be applied the 'unconditional hospitality'. However, it is fair to bear in mind that Derrida is inspired and draws from the work of Emile Benveniste who reminds us that etymologically *hospitality* comes from the Latin *hospis* that at certain historical moment meant the *enemy* (Benveniste 2016, 8). In this respect, the institution of hospitality might include the possibility of animosity between 'hosts' and uninvited 'guests' in the frame of unequal power relations that make reciprocity impossible.

Anthropological and close to experience ethnographic accounts confirm that for diverse agents and subjects, hospitality is practiced in a framework that is full of rules and temporal conditions for the newcomer. Marcel Mauss, much earlier (Mauss 2002) emphasized that there is no free-gift and that any form of gift is subject to rules of temporal order and reciprocity (*ibidem*). Buffer zones, that is illegal detainment for long, were imposed by EU to enable Europe to keep refugees and non-documented immigrants as far as possible away from its territory, increasing the divide between Europe and its 'Other'. However, this border policy is highly

problematic from the perspective of International Law as well as from a genuine humanist perspective as it constructs *limbo* spaces, escalates displacement, detainment and suffering. "They must be tough people, [the dwellers] I could not survive under these conditions one single day", a social worker told me, replicating what may be seen as 'radical alterity': the idea that the 'other' is radically different compared with us not only 'less civilized' but also 'less human' (Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris 2016). As Rozakou argued, "The production of the asylum seeker as a [vulnerable] guest is a profound assertion of that individual's depoliticization and disempowerment" (Rozakou 2012, 573). In this respect, the social workings of 'hospitality' may finally be capitalised by the host rather by its guest, as they add to its symbolic and humanitarian capital.

The transformation of the condition of *transit* to *permanent*, of the temporary to awaiting for long in inhuman conditions, by the fact that the procedures for the examination of Asylum Applications were accelerated or refrained according to the country of origin and the humanitarian criterion of vulnerability, turned the detained to *undesirables* in the model of *homo sacer* described by Agamben. The expansion of detainment on the grounds of 'who is a deserving refugee' or a 'worthy guest' contributed to further their vulnerability, to the deterioration of their suffering and their exposure to violence initially of the fascists and to symbolic violence of the local community later. Initially, the attack came from the Nazi's of Golden Dawn but as islanders realized that Chios becomes a zone of detention a 'buffer zone', right extremism became popular and mainstream. 'Chios becomes for Greece what Greece is for Europe a preeminent local who was for the action of the 'Committee of Struggle' claimed and reminded me of the welcome they had addressed to newcomers in the summer of 2015". All these drives me to argue with Hall, "that detention creates, targets, and produces populations of insecurity, undesirability, and illegality" (Hall 2012, 7) and that 'fortress Europe' policies, complemented by humanitarian management of the so called 'refugee crisis' based on intensified border controls and the divides between Europeaness and Otherness, generates hostility, misery and disorder both between those in the camp and between the detainees and the local com-

7. «Toutes les éthiques de l'hospitalité ne sont pas les mêmes, sans doute, mais il n'y a pas de culture ni de lien social sans un principe d'hospitalité ... *Le monde*, 2-Dec.-1997».

munities. This should not be taken as an accidental consequence of forced displacement and control but rather as the core issue of the neoliberal governmentality, governing through disorder and recycled violence.

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