
At the borders of Power

*Producing and resisting bare life in a state of exception on
Lesvos, Greece.*

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“So the Sans-papiers, “excluded” amongst the “excluded”, have stopped appearing as simply victims and have become actors in democratic politics. They have helped us immensely, with their resistance and their imagination, breathing life back into democracy. We owe them this recognition, we must say it, and must engage ourselves, ever more numerous, by their side, until their rights and justice are rendered.”

*Étienne Balibar, 1997.
What we owe to the Sans-papier. Speech.*

Preface and acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all my courageous friends whom I met and worked along side with during my stay in Greece. Your resilience, energy and creativity was and continues to be a great inspiration for me. I will forever stand alongside with you in the struggle for justice and freedom of movement for all.

I want to thank you Laura for being there with me, and for supporting and inspiring me with your love and your thoughts along the way. I'd like to thank Olivier for his guidance in the writing of this thesis, but above all for showing me that academia and university also offer a place for me where I can somehow feel at home. I'm grateful for those moments - cracks , if you will - where everything seemed to come together. Those moments of friendship, resistance, dignity, action, 'other-doing', knowledge and solidarity, both in and outside of university, are what made these years worthwhile.

I thank all my friends for their camaraderie, laughter, compassion and their critical thoughts and perspectives. Finally, I'd like to thank my parents for their unfailing support and warmth.

Thank you all.

Abstract

As a result of the Eu-Turkey deal, thousands of migrants are stuck on the Greek island of Lesbos. This research investigates how biopolitical strategies are applied to manage migrants at the Greek-Turkish border, as well as the way in which these strategies and powers are resisted. Through an Agambian perspective, this research first examines how Lesbos has become an exceptional space where conventional rule of law is suspended. Then I present how through sovereign bio-political strategies like politics of encampment, sovereign power produces migrants into 'bare life beings'. This research shows how through a strategy of encampment, migrants are simultaneously concentrated under sovereign rule, as that they are abandoned by sovereign power. Forced to live inside the camp, migrants are isolated from the (political) community but captured under its rule, where they are exposed to -and vulnerable for - arbitrary sovereign violence. Finally, detention and deportation are used as the ultimate tools of sovereignty, performing the politics of in- and exclusion. However, Sovereign power proves not to be absolute, for some migrants succeed to resist these powers. The resistance against a bare life existence is performed through political organisation, autonomous mobility, the reconfiguration of (public)space, and the construction of community.

Keywords: *Autonomy, bare life, migrants, encampment, Agamben, sovereignty, borders, resistance.*

List of acronyms

EASO	-	European Asylum support office
Eu	-	European Union
Europol	-	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
Frontex	-	"Frontières extérieures" - European Border and Coast Guard Agency
IOM	-	International Organisation for migration
UNHCR	-	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Due to its geographical location in the Greek-Turkish borderland, the island of Lesbos has always been a key point of entry to those looking for their way into Europe. Around 2010, as the sparks of the Arab uprisings turned to flames, an increasing amount of people started moving, fleeing civil-war and human rights abuses or looking to build a safer life in Europe. A momentum of migration was created, challenging and crossing the pre-existing barriers and borders, - a conflict which is still causing practical and political clashes to this day. The European union adopted a discourse of security and crisis. 'Managing' and controlling the border became a paramount concern, leading the EU to sign murky deportation deals with totalitarian leaders in order to keep as many irregular migrants out of the European Union as they possibly could. As a consequence, borders have tightened and the way into the EU has become increasingly difficult.

Thousands of migrants are now stranded at the borders of Europe, of which at least fifty thousand in Greece and fourteen thousand on the Greek islands (UNHCR, October 2017). The Greek island of Lesbos was marked as a 'hotspot' by the European Union's migration commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos in October 2015. This led to the creation of the EU-Turkey deal, which was signed on March 18, 2016. After the implementation of the deal, Moria turned into a secured camp, detention center and deportation hub (Tazzioli, 2016) from where migrants are being deported back to detention centres in Turkey. Both due to the declaration of a crisis and the EU-Turkey deal, Lesbos has become an 'exceptional' space in which the borders of law and juridical order are blurry and indistinct. The uncertainty and the deplorable, violent living conditions in the camps lead to (mental) health problems (Medecins Sans frontiere, October 2017) and despair amongst its residents. Still, thousands of people make the dangerous sea crossing to Lesbos every month. Around 7000 migrants are currently on the island (UNHCR, December 2017), of which roughly 5000 inside Camp Moria.

Outside of the confines of the centre, there are many migrants on Lesbos managing to maintain a certain level of agency. They live in informal camps, squats and other social spaces below the radar of existing political structures (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013) but have to fear police raids, arrest, detention and deportation

every day. For the migrant, Lesbos has become an prison island. In resistance to this securitisation, a culture of autonomous organization, solidarity groups and grassroute migrant-resistance has emerged on the island. The resistance is characterized by protests against deportation and injustice, self-organization, social centers and a critical stance towards the “hotspot logic of management”(Papada, 2016).

1.2 Research objective

The central goal of this research is twofold; first, exploring how biopolitical control is being exercised over the migrant in the securitized border space of Lesbos, both in and outside of camps and detention centers. Second, I will focus on the (informal) structures that migrants set up to avoid being managed and controlled and how solidarity groups work together with them in practices of resistance. I will explore what the performance of migrant agency in this securitized border space looks like and how control and subjectification is subverted into resistance and political action.

1.3 Research questions

Main question

In order to reach my research goals and objectives I have formulated the following overarching research question: **How is power exercised over migrants on Lesbos, and in what way are these powers resisted?**

In order to come to a well-informed and founded answer to this question, I formulated several sub-question that will guide me through the research:

1. How is power exercised over migrants?

1.1 -What does the contemporary European border regime and immigration control policy look like?(hotspot management/Eu-Turkey deal/Dublin)

1.2- How is this policy and regime enacted on Lesbos, Greece ?
(Encampment/surveillance/ Frontex/detention)

1.3 - What mode of power can we identify on the island of Lesbos ?

1.4 - What role does humanitarian aid work play?

2. *In what way is resistance and counter conduct practiced against these powers?*

2.1- What tactics and strategies do migrants use to avoid the power of control and management ?

2.2 – How do migrant and solidarity groups create or reconfigure space? Can we describe these places as true countersites?

2.3 - What politics motivate migrant solidarity groups and what role do they play in resistance against the border-regime and the creation of counter sites.

2.4 - What does the relationship between activist and migrants look like and what are the challenges that arise inside these relationships?

2.5 - Can we describe the actions of migrants and solidarity groups as a performance of agency/political action/resistance and social life? Or is it 'just' a situation of surviving 'bare life'?

1.4 *Scientific and societal relevance*

“One obvious role for a radical intellectual is to do precisely that: to look at those who are creating viable alternatives, try to figure out what might be the larger implications of what they are (already) doing, and then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contributions, possibilities—as gifts” (Graeber, 2004, p.12)

This research will contribute empirical knowledge into the field of biopolitical strategies of encampment, the relatively young field of autonomy of migration studies and to a broader academic audience. The research is undertaken on an island, which, due to its geographical nature, ensures that autonomous movement and organisation are particularly challenging. This challenge makes the focus on migrant autonomy and agency especially relevant because it suggests that performances of autonomy (of mobility) will most probably have a different character than on a non-island setting. Additionally, this research will take place at a crucial moment in which the effects of the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal are becoming a visible reality. Halting irregular migration is the intended outcome of the deal. Thus, studying the autonomy of migration in Lesbos will add

contemporary knowledge to the autonomy of migration theory in relation to increasing control and management over that mobility.

Moreover, engaged research specifically also attempts to be of actual societal relevance. This study can provide tools and reflection for migrants(/activists) on the working of power, counter-practices and alternatives. The production of concepts and the innovation of theory can in this way, offer contributions to a struggle for social justice.

1.5 Outline of thesis

This thesis will proceed as follows: I will first present you the research methodology I have chosen to follow. Making it clear in what way, and according to what research ethics I have conducted my research and gathered my data. After, I describe which theories I have made use of to understand the data and outcomes of my research. I have chosen to place my research in a landscape of two theories that seem to contradict, or at least challenge each other. On one side; a theory of biopolitics that suggest the existence of a power so all-encompassing and totalitarian that it leaves no place for agency and resistance, and on the other side, the theory of autonomy, that attributes power and agency to people(migrants on Lesbos, in this case), claiming that they are not merely victims or overpowered bodies, but humans constructing and constituting their own world.

In the presentation and analysis of my data I aimed to keep these two perspectives in dialogue with each other. What part my empirical data 'resonates' with which perspective? Through which theory can my data be explained? In chapter 4, 5, 7 and 8 I analyze how the current political situation and the politics of encampment on Lesbos can be understood as biopolitics. In chapter 6 and 9, I present data that reveals a different side to that story. A story of spacemaking and 'other doing', a story of agency and autonomy of mobility. In chapter 10, the conclusive chapter, I'll make an effort in binding the data and the results of my analysis together and will present the conclusions I draw from my research.

2. Methodology

"Science has been utopian and visionary from the start; that is one reason "we" need it." (Harraway, 1988, p.585)

In order to answer my research questions I will engage in an in- depth, qualitative and inductive case study that is shaped by a so called 'militant' research approach. This approach is an epistemological stance towards inquiry that, I believe, will give me the most ethical, valid and reliable answers to my research question. Militant research is part of the wider tradition of action oriented research methods and builds on the foundations of Marx's (1880) workers inquiry (Russel, 2015) and action-research design established by Kurt Lewin in 1944. Militant research then developed through in the theoretical and political Italian operaismo movement in the 1960's (Russel, 2015) of which Silvia Federici and Antonio Negri are two prominent representatives (Triisberg, 2015). Today, the militant research approach is increasingly being adopted by radical geographers, anthropologists and research collectives like the '*Precarias a la Deriva*' and the '*Bordermonitoring.eu*' collective.

According to Kaufman(2006), the term militancy refers to the conjunction of belief and action and *"implies at least a desire for a change in the world, if not necessarily action toward that change"*(Kaufman, 2006). Militant research, he continues, is *"a relationship with other people that produces knowledge, as part of sustained concerted actions based on shared intense political commitment"*(Kaufman, 2006). Militant research approaches challenge popular epistemology and the division between political action and academic research. According to Juris, militant research addresses the 'objectivist bias' that the distant researcher has, *"when in treats social life as an object to decode, rather than entering into the flow and rhythm of ongoing social interaction"*.(Juris, 2007, p.165). Becoming part of this rhythm enables the researcher to systematically collect information *"that is designed to bring about social change"*(Bogdan & Biklen 1992, p.223).

By no means should the term and approach of militancy be fetishized. There isn't one holy grail of research methods, but a plethora of methods suited to different research situations. Nevertheless, I deeply appreciate and value the history and genealogy of the militant approach. I believe militant research has many

dimensions and does not necessarily follow one single paradigm so it seems important to elaborate somewhat on how I perceive it. For me, as a researcher and activist, I opt for this type of research because it enables me to do research about a movement's practices and dynamics while being embedded in, and committed to, the social movement myself. Militant research is conducted from within instead of outside the movement (Juris, 2007) and it is collaborative and ethically based (Hole, 2011). Similarities can be found with participatory action research with which research techniques and ethics will certainly overlap. Nevertheless, 'militancy' goes beyond the participatory character of the research design by ensuring a certain embeddedness in the struggle. Militant research is politically engaged and is part of political intervention itself. This research will also be involved with a power analysis and investigation and adopts Kurt Lewin's argument that systems can best be learned from by trying to change them through action (Marrow, 1977).

Furthermore, militant research critically reflects on how our knowledge is produced, according to Garelli & Tazzioli (2013) It [*militancy*] expresses an understanding of knowledge production as a political epistemology. Understanding knowledge, and the production thereof as political, links to how post- and decolonial studies shed a critical light on the foundation of our knowledge. Militant research, I believe, is critical knowledge production and is part of the decolonial tradition by "*enabling and fostering research capabilities for the disenfranchised, who as knowing actors can define their reality, describe their history and therefore transform their lives*" (Fahmi, 2007).

For migration studies, the term militant "*signals an effort to counter the depoliticization of migration as manifest in its incorporation within the academic practices of a ' -Studies*" (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2013) In an interview conducted with Mezzadra in 2013, he explains how he conceptualizes militant research as a 'double opening': "*on the one hand, to put it metaphorically, an opening toward the bottom, towards struggles; on the other hand, I mean an opening toward the production of concepts and theoretical innovation.* (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2013)

The militant and participatory action approach criticizes and questions the dominance of positivist epistemology in science. It produces situated knowledge that challenges the figure of the detached observer: *“a neutral seeker of truth and objectivity who at the same time controls the disciplinary rules and puts himself or herself in a privileged position to evaluate and dictate.”* (Mignolo, 2009, P.4) Situated knowledge is a feminist conception introduced by Donna Haraway(1988). This theory contests the doctrine of universal ‘objective research’, and addresses the inherent bias possessed by all researchers. All research, Haraway proposes, comes from a certain viewpoint, whether or not this is disclosed. Haraway argues that knowledge is always situated in a body, a history and a space and can therefore never be value or context free. According to Haraway, this does not mean the replacement of a ‘totalitarian’ science with scientific relativism. To the contrary, Haraway believes that *“Relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere”*(1988, p.584). Indeed, she argues that *“relativism is the perfect mirror twin of totalization in the ideologies of objectivity; both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective; both make it impossible to see well”*(1988, p.584). Thus, instead of pursuing universal, generalized truths or pursuing scientific relativism, science should take up a partial perspective in order to reach a humble understanding of objectivity and scientific authority, as she explains: *“Objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment, and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility”* (1988, p.582..) (...) *But it is precisely in the politics and epistemology of partial perspectives that the possibility of sustained, rational, objective inquiry rests”*(Haraway, 1988, p.584).

2.1 Locating myself

“ We need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate color and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name” (Haraway, 1988, p.583)

Choosing for a militant research design as a fundamental base of my research praxis means that I need to be highly reflective and self-critical on my position and subjectivity as a researcher. Although it raises other questions about putting myself

too much in the center of this thesis, I feel an ethical responsibility to disclose my own positionality.

It is necessary for me to emphasize and highlight my own positionality, for I believe my positionality reveals to quite an extent what shaped my knowledge and interpretation of this world. By locating myself I will thus be able to make more responsible knowledge claims.

I am located in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, where I was born as a white male approximately twenty six years ago. I went through the Dutch school system, where most of the knowledge presented to me was produced by white males too. As a youngster at home, my position was never seriously precarious. As a young teen I developed a growing interest in - and feeling for - , activism and social justice movements. Being involved in activism for over a decade in many places across this world has deeply shaped my understanding of it, and continues to do so. In university, this perspective continues to influence my academic work, and so it has influenced my research and this thesis you are reading.

My positionality, had a big impact on my research work in Greece. The power relations that exist between me and the migrants stuck in Greece are insuperable. Although my interpersonal communication and our collective organisation promise- and struggle for- horizontality, A immense imbalance in power and privilege remained; the power of free movement. My power to move my body to Greece and back to the Netherlands, the privilege of my dutch passport, a privilege that most migrants wish for and thousands of migrants have died for.

The continuous confrontation with my own privilege made me feel uncomfortable and emotional at times. Knowing when to make use of of a certain privilege and when to take a step back in order to not reproduce the same social relationships that you oppose, demands a constant awareness of that privilege. An odd kind of burden. My own personal history, and my position in a greater global history are, I believe, not something I should try to overcome or deny. To the contrary, by emphasizing and reflecting on how I was shaped and how privilege has enabled opportunity for me, I aim to offer an honest perspective from which this thesis can be read and understood.

2.2 Data collection

For my research have made use of participatory-action and militant-research, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, Informal group conversations, group-discussions and observations. I have been engaged with the daily lives of migrants within and outside of state regulated camps, both in and outside of the city. I have conducted research and collected data through my involvement in solidarity projects (such as 'Noborderkitchen Lesvos'), actions and campaigns from both the migrants and solidarity groups. Furthermore, I have kept a diary to collect and reflect on my observations, thoughts and concerns. I have tried to choose my respondents with a certain care. I have tried not to use a 'snowball' sampling method to avoid only having interview data from one specific group of peers or community on the island. Some respondents however, definitely know each other and work together in the same projects. All of them live or have lived in the refugee camp Moria on Lesvos. The respondents have different national backgrounds, such as the following: Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Iranian-Kurdistan, Iraqi-Kurdistan and Afghanistan. All of the respondents I have conducted interviews with for this research are men. I would have wished that to be different but it turned out to be so that I have mainly developed meaningful and trustful relationships with men during my stay. For other observations, informal conversations and group conversation I *have* interacted and worked with a gender-diverse crowd. The groups I've been active in consisted- at that moment- mainly of men, although the people with European passports were mainly women (or non-binary gender identities). Reason for the fact that I have been mainly working with men could be that during my stay on Lesvos, in spring 2017, many migrants on the island and in camp Moria were male. The male-female ratio of migrants on the island is a constant subject of change, as for example at the moment of writing (september 2017) a big rise in female border crossers is witnessed.

Given the precarious and sometimes 'irregular' position of my respondents I will protect their anonymity by only citing them or referring to them with the first letter of their name.

3. Theoretical landscape

I position my research in a theoretical landscape of two different theories on power. The two main theories and approaches I will use to discuss my own research findings are Foucault's theory on disciplinary and biopower (1977;1975-1976;1976) and Agamben's theory on the state of exception(2005), the camp(1997) and 'bare life'(1998). These two theorists mainly construct their argument around the power of structure and 'overpowering'. Additionally, I will utilize other scholars such as Vaughan-William (2009) and Salter (2008) who have worked on the link between Foucault's and Agamben's theories and border and migration studies. In opposition to these theories I will bring forth the autonomy of migration gaze, an approach adopted by different scholars such as Mezzadra (2011) and Papadopoulos(2013) which focuses on the power of agency and autonomy. These theories are not necessarily always operating in the same fields, but they do relate to the two core concepts of this thesis: power and resistance. In this theoretical chapter, I will give an overview of these theories, without yet confronting them with my own empirical findings. Within the chapter of analysis these theories will be applied to the empirical research data.

3.1.1 Foucault's biopolitical power

Foucault theorised a genealogy of power; in which he explains how different modes of power have been dominant throughout history, and how these powers have used different political governing strategies. Foucault explained how in the modern state, citizens are not disciplined through 'overpowering' the human body as happened under the repressive punishment systems of the sovereign powers. Instead, in the modern state, power is executed and exercised through the organization of life (Weber, 2009, p. 135). Foucault analyses describes a shift in the west; around the beginning of the 18th century. The mechanisms and technologies of power transformed into a modus of power that focuses on the discipline and normalization of the individual, this modality of power Foucault describes as a disciplinary power. Later in the 18th century the focus of power and its political strategies shifts towards the population and all the biological aspects that affect it (Genel, 2006). A power that is "*taking control of life and the biological processes of*

man-as-species”(Foucault, 2003 p.246). This form of power, Foucault names ‘biopower’, and “is concerned with regularizing the biological characteristics of a population; it attempts to control the variables that determine statistics like birth rate, death rate, life span, etc; it wants to regulate, manage, and administer the multiplicity of bodies that forms a population”(Walsh, 2014, p2). In Foucault analyses, biopower does not entirely replace disciplinary power. Instead, Disciplinary power becomes one of the two “poles” out of which biopower is constructed, on one side a ‘pole’ that executes its power over the body, and on the other side a pole of power that it executed over the population. Although, according to Foucault, biopower takes a dominant position in modern governing strategies, he does say that this does not imply that all sovereign power disappeared. According to Foucault, the shift from sovereign to biopolitical power marks the beginning of modern governing strategies. The original shift towards a disciplinary power seems crucial for the later transition towards biopower as it works as one of the two ‘poles’ of biopower. That is why I will elaborate on the disciplinary mode of power.

3.1.2 Disciplinary power

Disciplinary power is a subtle power, a power that is executed through the citizens themselves, making them the agent of power. Unlike sovereign power, disciplinary is not easy to locate as it is everywhere and executed through everyone. It can be hard to recognize or describe for it appears in the abstract and in the consciousness. Still, there are places where it is more visible, such as in schools, factories, prisons and hospitals. The panoptical prison design serves as a perfect example. The open, circular design functions because it is focused not on a physical coercive domination of the body but on the coercion of discipline through the idea of constant control. The fact that this control is not easy to locate makes disciplinary power so powerful. Exactly because control is nowhere but could be everywhere, makes that disciplinary power “induces a state of conscious and permanent visibility [on the disciplined] that assures the automatic functioning of power”(Foucault, 1977) this way, Foucault continues: “the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary”(Foucault, 1977). This way, the society functions like the panoptical prison where everyone acts in a disciplined way as if they are under permanent control. This discipline shapes what kind of citizens we should be and penetrates deep into the private sphere. Discipline is a ‘normalizing’ function that created ideal and ‘safe citizens’(Weber, 2009), it constructs the citizen as a moral agent. The ideal

citizen reflects the beliefs and values, practices and lifestyles that the governing power want their citizens to have, however, according to Foucault; disciplinary power is not only to be identified with a certain institution (like a state), more than that, he explains: *"it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise"*(1977, p.215) . In *discipline and punish* (1977) Foucault elaborates more on how and when disciplinary power is active and explains that especially *"Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used"* (1977). Although, Foucault does not explicitly touch upon the topic of migration in *Discipline and punish*, his writings can be applied to the reality of migration, control on mobility and resistance to that control in the borderlands today.

"That is why discipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions. It must also master all the forces that are formed from the very constitution of an organized multiplicity; it must neutralize the effects of counter-power that spring from them and which form a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it: agitations, revolts, spontaneous organizations, coalitions - anything that may establish horizontal conjunctions"(Foucault, 1977, p.219).

Foucault recognises the complex nature of power: that it can also be a *productive* force(Gaventa, 2003). Power is not only a force of repression and domination, but of *empowerment* and enablement. Power then, is always multifaceted, and although Foucault emphasized the dominance of disciplinary power in modern society, he did recognize the ongoing exertion of sovereign power: *"sovereign and disciplinary mechanisms are two absolutely integral constituents of the general mechanisms of power in our society"*(Foucault, 1980, p. 108). According to Salter (2008) we can find both of these powers at work at the border: *"the sovereign power to ban or exclude; the disciplinary effect of the border examination on sovereign subjects"*(2008, p.366).

3.1.3 Biopower

"Thus, when life becomes the ultimate political value, the logic of war -that one must be capable of killing to be able to keep on living- seems to become the principle of states. The care of the health of the population is indistinguishable from the fight against (and the necessity of eliminating) the enemy."(Inda, 2002, p.102)

Disciplinary power worked as a 'stepping stone' towards biopower, since before a population even existed, the multiplicity of individual bodies needed to be become docile and disciplined before it could function as a population. After this transition then, biopower becomes a dominant power. In his *Society must be defended* lecture series in 1976 at the College de France, Foucault states that biopower addresses itself: *"to a multiplicity of men to the extent that they form a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness and so on"* While Disciplinary power, he continues, *"tries to rule a multiplicity of men to the extent that their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and if need be...punished"* (Foucault, 1976 p.242). Biopower manifests itself as a power that feeds, fosters, cares, directs and protects the population, and as a power that regulates its reproduction. Biopolitical strategies focus more on regulation, instead of discipline. *"Unlike discipline, which is addressed to bodies, the new non disciplinary power is applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, To man-as-living-being. To man-as-species."*(Foucault. 2003, p242). The introduction of the biological life into the political domain, marks the shift from sovereign to biopower, and leaves behind the 'classical' assumption made in (a certain reading of) Aristotle's *Politics* that there exists a separation between the biological life (*zoe*) and the political, public life (*bios*). According to Vaughan-Williams's(2009) reading of Foucault, this means that *"the entry of zoe into bios occasioned a fundamental shift in the nexus between politics and life, where the simple fact of life is no longer excluded from political calculations and mechanisms but absolutely central to modern politics."*(p.734). It is within those mechanism, technologies, calculations and strategies that Foucault explains the working of biopower. Bio political strategies, those political strategies with biopower as its *modus operandi*, manifests themselves through regulations and 'management of life'. This

management of life occurs through medical institutions, administrative regulations, legislation and law and it takes collective phenomena as its object of study, knowledge and intervention. (Blencowe, 2011). Foucault describes how in the second half of the 18th century the state centered its focus on biological aspects of life as there are: mortality rates, birth rates, sexuality, age, hygiene and medicine, natalist policy and demography (Foucault, 2003). In 'A history of sexuality (1990) Foucault explains how the growing interest in keeping the population healthy and accumulating, relates to other aspects of modernity like demographic growth, industrialisation and the rise of capitalist state, as "*biopower was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes.*" (Foucault, 1990, P. 141). Institutions arose to ensure that the population could stay healthy, active and safe. Insurance, public hygiene campaigns, norms about sexuality, safety measurements, all were introduced as rational mechanisms to eradicate the accidental and the unusual in society (Foucault, 2003). This way, biopolitics "*installed security mechanisms around the random element inherent to population in state of beings. so as to optimize the state of life*" (Foucault, 2003, p.246). Although these mechanisms are installed to optimize overall well being of the population and the security of the whole, they have a dark underside to them. Foucault explains how the introduction of governing *man-as-species*, made it possible to introduce a whole range of racist and exclusive governing strategies. After all, who will decide who belongs to the population, and who and what is usual or unusual? The modern state now arrives at a position in which it needs to decide which life is of value and which life is not, or in Foucault's words: which life needs to be '*fostered*', and which life can be '*disallowed till the point of death*' (Foucault, 1990). This way, the aim to establish a healthy, normalized equilibrium in the population at the same time leads to an 'overall well being' as it leads to segregation, social hierarchization, relationships of domination and death (Foucault, 2003).

One could argue that this is nothing new, that every state has always valued one sort of life over the other. That states never had a problem with the removal of certain sorts of life. The difference with modern biopolitical strategies is, according to Foucault, that the death of the other is now only authorized (and legitimized) if it contributes to the overall wellbeing and health of the population. When Foucault is talking about death, he is not only talking about it as murder as such but also about

“every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death of some people, rejection, or quite simply, political death, expulsion, and so on”(Foucault, 2003, p.256).

3.2 Agamben and the original activity of sovereign power

“The conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationship except that they were still human. The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human” (Arendt 1951, 295)

In the previous pages I have attempted to offer an introduction on Foucault's formulation of biopower, in order to explain and utilise Agamben's theoretical contribution and critique on the condition of biopower.

Giorgio Agamben is an Italian philosopher and political theorist born in 1942. His main work focuses on totalitarianism and biopolitics and is written down in the 'homo sacer' volumes. More than Foucault did in his work does Agamben relate to contemporary biopolitical phenomena like the figure of the refugee and the politics of encampment. That is also why I will use Agamben as main theorist in order to explain or discuss my empirical findings.

Although Agamben's work has been strongly influenced by Foucault, there are important distinctions between them, indeed most of Agamben's work can best be understood as a revision or reformulation of Foucault's work. The most crucial modifications can be found in a critique of Foucault's genealogy of the structure and origin of power (Zembylas, 2010). For Foucault, modernity marks the shift from sovereign power to biopower, where life of the human species becomes the stake of political strategies (Genel, 2006). According to Foucault, biopower is a specifically modern mode of power, which Agamben contradicts. For Agamben, biopower and sovereignty are “fundamentally integrated” (Mills, 2008). He argues that biopolitical power has been active in Western political strategies since the

classical times. Moreover, Agamben argues that biopower has not only existed long before modernity, but that it is the 'bare essence of politics as such' (Mesnard, 2004). To explain his argument Agamben introduces a genealogy of 'bare life' in which he brings forth the figure of the 'Homo sacer': life that can be killed but not sacrificed. This figure, taken from Archaic Roman law is both excluded from divine law as from human jurisdiction (Ek, 2006). With the introduction of this figure, Agamben tries to explain that the original nature of sovereign politics is actually biopolitical and manifests itself through a relation of the *ban*, a relationship of exception (Ek, 2006). *"He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable."* (Agamben, 1998, p.21) The notion that exclusion from the political realm at the same times means an inclusion in the rule of the sovereign, -and thus works as an inclusive exclusion-, is crucial in understanding Agamben's work. According to Agamben, it is the inclusive exclusion that forms the original activity of sovereign power (Agamben, 1998). Agamben argues, that it is the normalisation of this inclusive exclusion that marks *modern* political power. The exception has become the rule, and so Agamben argues: *"in our age, all citizens can be said, in a specific but extremely real sense, to appear virtually as 'homines sacri'"* (Agamben, 1998, p.73).

3.2.1 *The state of exception*

"The state of exception is not a dictatorship (whether constitutional or unconstitutional, commissarial or sovereign) but a space devoid of law, a zone of anomie in which all legal determinations – and above all the very distinction between public and private – are deactivated."

(Agamben, 2005)

Agamben's thesis that '*the exception*' is the original political relation of sovereign power is based on the definition of the sovereign introduced by Carl Schmitt's (a controversial German political theorist). The sovereign, thus Schmitt, is: "he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt, 1922, p.5). This implies that, the sovereign can not only decide on what constitutes 'law and order', but above all it can decide on when it [law and order] is in place, and when it can be suspended

(Agamben, 1998; Ek, 2006). The state of exception can thus be put in place as and when the sovereign requires it. For example; an emergency situation in which the state is threatened. Declaring a state of emergency is a form of putting a state of exception in place; by declaring a state of emergency, democratic states can suspend law and juridical order. Rather than saying that the state of exception is a state in which no law exists, Agamben stresses that the state of exception is a state of indifference, where the line between inside and outside is blurred (Agamben, 2005).

3.2.2 *The production of Bare life*

It is the state of exception that allows the state “to strip individuals of the right that mark politicized life” (Ellerman, 2009) in order to produce a ‘bare life’. The possibility of stripping one's right that mark politicized life shows how Agamben's theory uses and diffuses the classical distinction between the *bios* (political life) and the *zoe* (biological life). It is important to stress that when Agamben is talking about ‘bare life’ he does not simply refer to biological life as in *zoe*. The notion of bare life refers to political life being stripped down, abandoned and exposed to the violent force of sovereign power, “it is the remainder of the destroyed political bios” (Ziarek, 2012, p1). Bare life, is the biological body that is included through the exclusion of political life. “Sovereign power produces bare life as a banned form of life because its undecidable juridical–political status allows for the routinization of exceptional practices such as detainment without trial, torture, and even execution.” (Vaughan Williams, 2008, p333) For Agamben, the production of the biopolitical and bare life body is essential for western sovereign power, as it is both that on which its power is established as it is that on which it can exercise its power (Ek, 2006; Genel, 2006,) “Production of bare life, therefore, is the originary activity of sovereignty” (Genel, 2016 p.51).

3.2.3 *The camp as the biopolitical paradigm of the planet*

In the third volume of *Homo sacer*, Agamben adds a specifically spatial characteristic to his theory on sovereign power, the state of exception and the production of bare life. Agamben claims, that the ‘the camp’ is the true paradigm of political modernity (and not - for example - Foucault's *panopticon*) , in his own words; the camp is not a “historicized fact and an anomaly belonging to the past (even if

still verifiable)" but appears as: " *the hidden matrix and 'nomos'¹ of the political space in which we are still living*" (Agamben, 1998, P166). Agamben refers to the camp as an archetype of the biopolitical space, a place where the production of bare life and its vulnerability to sovereign violence can be found in its purest and most fundamental form;

"Insofar as its inhabitants were stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life, the camp was [...] the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized, in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation. This is why the camp is the very paradigm of political space at the point at which politics becomes biopolitics and homo sacer is virtually confused with the citizen" (Agamben, 1998, p171).

The camp is a space of indistinction, where the distinction or relationship between the *bios* and the *zoe* becomes blurry and indistinct (Vaughan-Williams, 2009). Through the camp, Agamben argues, "the state of exception is given a permanent spatial arrangement" (Agamben, 1998, p169), we can understand the camp as the attempt to materialize the state of exception. It is exactly that place where bare life is produced, specifically because of its spatiality that is at the same time abandoning as that it is localizing the biopolitical body. It is the geography of the camp that expresses the relation of abandonment that marks sovereign power, it is the 'spatial' performance of 'inclusion through exclusion'. As the camp is a materialisation of the exception, normal juridical order and procedures, ethics or conceptions of rights do not apply there. It is a place where atrocities can be committed without consequence and where violence is arbitrary, depending on the ethical sense and goodwill of the police; "*who temporarily acts as the sovereign*" (Agamben, 1998 P174). Is it, however, not Agamben aim to ask questions concerning specific acts of violence committed. He argues, that it would be more honest and useful to "*investigate how power can deprive humans of their rights in such a sense, that no act committed against them could appear any longer as a crime*"(Agamben. 1998, P 171).

¹ The term 'Nomos' has various meanings and interpretations but Agamben seems to borrow this term from Schmitt(1950), meaning something like: law, normality, norm. Also specifically applies to spatial organization and order.

While Agamben starts his analyses with a localized historical genealogy of the camp in Europe, moving from national socialist extermination camps to Guantanamo bay to contemporary refugee camps, he also uses the concept of *"a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction"* (Agamben, 1998, p174) in a way to explain spaces that would not specifically fit the label of a 'camp' but are part of the 'normal interior' of the state (Agamben, 1998). He recognizes the structure of the ban (and thus the logic of the camp) in the holding centers on French airports where people asking for refugee status are placed for a certain amount of days without 'normal' access to juridical assistance, he locates the logic of the camp in a stadium in Bari, Italy, which the Italian police used in 1991 to herd illegal migrants into before there were deported (Agamben, 1998). Agamben locates the logic of the camp and the state of exception also at the borders of Europe (and their political space), where the camp, and the logic of the camp are evermore evident. Here, Agamben relates back to the elementary categories of the modern Westphalian nation state; the state, territory and birth (nativity). According to Agamben those elements constitute the 'originary fiction' of sovereignty and for it to function everything should fit within them. The figure of the refugee is presented by Agamben as a 'disquieting' element, for the refugee breaks open *"the identity between the human and the citizen and that between nativity and nationality, it brings the originary fiction of sovereignty to crisis"* (Agamben, 2000, p93). In defence of the birth-nation link, the state will try to regulate anyone that can not be inscribed in that order and thus can not function within the traditional mechanism (Agamben, 1998). It is the camp, according to Agamben, that becomes the regulating system. It is the logic of the camp that regulates who is included and who is excluded, who is appropriate and who is not, whose life is valuable, and whose life is disposable. It is the performance of *defining* the population. Agamben stresses how new laws on citizenship and (de)nationalisation of citizens have always appeared together with the installation of camps, referring to the Nuremberg laws on citizenship in the 3rd Reich and the appearance of the (stateless) refugee/camps. Agamben is not afraid to draw parallels between prisoners of Nazi concentration camps, refugee detention camps and camps like Guantanamo bay because their (legal) situations *"are 'paradigmatically' equivalent"* (Gregory, 2006) since they are all *"entirely removed from the law, and from any judicial oversight"* (Agamben, 2005, p4-5). All of these camps carry an underlying logic and

justification that they need to exist in order for the population to exist, that they exist for public security. And because everything is permitted in the name of protection, any kind of fundamental human rights, juridical order or morality can be suspended.

In examination of the border as a biopolitical space, many critical border and migration scholars (Salter, 2008; Mezzadra & Nielson, 2013; Vaughan Williams, 2015; 2009; Bigo, 2007; Bigo & Guild, 2006; Topak, 2014) have recognized and worked with Agamben's theory on the state of exception and have acknowledged that the *Homo sacer* of our times, is indeed actualized by the refugee. Likewise, contemporary border and security practices are being analyzed within the logic of the exception. Some scholars argue that the border is a permanent state of exception (Salter, 2008) and that bordering practices and biopolitical control like surveillance, security, regularity/irregularity, passports and visa requirements fall under the same logic and are being made possible through the exception. These practices do not necessarily have to be localized at the border itself, an idea that builds on Agamben's thesis that the juridico-political structure of the camp, indeed functions as the *nomos* of political space. To conceptualize the border zones around the world as spaces of indistinction, Vaughan-Williams (2009) introduces the notion of the generalised biopolitical border, a concept that refers to "*the global archipelago of zones of indistinction in which sovereign power produces the bare life it needs to sustain itself and notions of sovereign community*" (Vaughan-Williams, 2009 p.747). This notion shows a similar approach towards 'border zones' as Agamben (1998) and Salter (2008), as the border is not only identified at the periphery of the political territory, but recognized as a dividing mechanism within the very centre of political space.

3.2.4 Critics

Where Agamben's work has been taken up by many border scholars, it has also gathered a considerable amount of critique. The main critique that many migration scholars (Doty, 2011; Ziarek, 2008; Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007; Ellerman, 2009) share, is that - contrary to Foucault - Agamben seems to leave no space for any kind of resistance against sovereign power and the production of bare life. According to Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, "*Bare life is, in extremis, that condition of abjection from which no thought of resistance is possible. Power and resistance are separated*

by the decisionist sovereign who identifies the space of the law and its limits. Sovereign power is the decisive exercise of control over subjects, including the confinement of subjects to a position of bare abjection” (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007, p21).

Agamben does however, concludes *Homo sacer* with a promising ‘turnaround’ of his theory on bare life, that I believe leaves possibilities for resistance. In the last pages of *Homo sacer* Agamben reverses the notion of bare life as something so absolutely politically powerless, “*indistinct of fact and law, of life and juridical rule, and of nature and politics*” (Agamben, 1998, 119) that nothing can threaten bare life, because basically, it has nothing left to lose. Other scholars (Genel, 2006; Ziarek, 2008) have continued theorizing and discussed the possibility of bare life being mobilized by emancipatory movements. Individual acts of re-enacting’ or reclaiming bare life are identified in ‘bodily’ acts as sewing lips, automutilation, hunger strikes or even suicide. However, there is a debate whether these acts can be described as actual acts of political resistance or exactly as performances of bare life. Where are the true possibilities for resisting the production bare life? Agamben’s critics wonder. They call into question the totalitarian conditions of sovereign power, and its space; the camp.

3.3 *Autonomy of migration*

These movements often cost terrible suffering, but there is also in them a desire of liberation that is not satiated except by re-appropriating new spaces, around which are constructed new freedoms. Everywhere these movements arrive, and all along their paths they determine new forms of life and cooperation (Hardt & Negri, 2000; p 397)

Agamben’s critics (of which many are critical border and migration scholars) do not *only* believe in the existence of cracks and fissures in the structure of sovereign power, but they propose and argue for an altogether different perspective to the performance of power. This perspective is theorized by some scholars (Papadopoulos, 2013;2008; Mezzadra, 2011;2010; Rodriguez, 1996; Garelli & Tazzioli, 2013) as the *autonomy of migration* gaze, and finds its roots in the Italian Autonomismo and Operaismo movements of which Antonio Negri and Mario

Tronti are prominent scholars. The Autonomismo movement emphasized the agency of the working class, and assumes that the self-activity of the working class is to *"the lever of revolutionary passage, [.....] By privileging itself, by valorizing its own needs, the class could subvert the valorization of capital"*(Ryan, 1991 p.xxx). Autonomismo attributes a power to the working class, that they can actually construct their own world, that they can change the conditions of their material existence. Autonomy of migration scholars adopt a similar argument, and critique the way Agamben builds his theory on sovereign power from the perspective of control from 'above', reducing migrants to nothing but bare life, to almost 'perverse' non-beings, without any room for human agency or political struggle.

"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. Things are always done to them, not by them. Only occasionally are they granted the capacity to act, and then in desperate ways" (Walters, 2008, p188).

The autonomy of migration approach adds a social/political movement and agency discourse to the field of borders and migration. Meaning, that the 'migration world' is not merely constituted by institutions, governments and practises of control on mobility, but is constituted from below, by migrants themselves (Papadopoulos et al., 2008). *"Migration adapts differently to each particular context; it changes its faces, links unexpected social actors together, absorbs and reshapes the sovereign dynamics targeting its control"* (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, p.226) So, when looking at the aspect of control, instead of focussing on control *over* mobility, the autonomy of migration gaze focuses on how control is shaped *by* mobility and movement.

Following an autonomous approach, migration is not necessarily only trying to make claims on institutional power (Papadopoulos, 2013)like claims on citizenship, its movement means that it is enacting power in itself by practising and enacting citizenship(Bojadžijev & Karakayali, 2007 p.205). This social movement of migration is forcing existing institutions and communities to re-imagine our understanding of political community and belonging. In this way, the autonomy of migration gaze certainly also recognizes the migrant as a 'disquieting' figure for the world order of nation-states.

The fact that the autonomy of migration gaze attributes agency to migrants does not does *not* mean that the approach is blind for the injustice and structures revolving migration, as Papadopoulos describes: *“The autonomy of migration approach does not, of course, consider migration in isolation from social, cultural and economic structures. The opposite is true: migration is understood as a creative force within these structures’ (2008 p.202).* Vital here is, that the autonomy of migration discourse refuses to adopt the language of control, victimhood and helplessness that surround mainstream discourse on migration. Papadopoulos continues: *It means looking at migratory movements and conflicts in terms that prioritize the subjective practices, the desires, the expectations, and the behaviours of migrants themselves. This does not imply a romanticization of migration, since the ambivalence of these subjective practices and behaviours is always kept in mind”(2008).*

Analyses

4. Lesvos as an island of exception - a place that is not Europe -

“Really I don’t understand. I’m confused, full confused often (..) Before I was reading the news, it was not about this Europe. I’m not in the same Europe, I’m reading news and it’s about a different Europe, even when I was coming here, there were people welcoming me, it was a different Europe, but when i’m going in Moria , and somewhere in police station for example and talking with lawyers, it’s a different Europe”(A.)

In this first chapter of the analyses I aim to deconstruct the road towards ‘exceptionality’ of the space of Lesvos. What processes, laws and regulations can I identify that resonate with the theoretical foundations of exceptionality? Starting with the implementation of the hotspot approach, I analyze how the approach came into being by the virtue of a discourse of emergency and crisis that was adopted by European leaders.

In 2015, the EU and Turkey signed the so called EU-Turkey deal (hereinafter referred to as : *the deal*). A deal made in order to stop all unauthorized border crossing from Turkey into Greece. The deal affected the (legal) situation and position of migrants on the greek islands dramatically. The foundation for the Eu Turkey deal was laid back in the summer of 2015, when the Eu was looking for a response to what is now most frequently referred to as the ‘*European refugee crisis*’. The fact that the big influx of refugees into the European union in 2015 was generally conceived as a crisis for European leaders explains a great deal about Europe’s response to the events happening. Crisis management and securitisation of the border became number one priority. This was demonstrated by the ‘Hotspot’ approach, that was implemented by the European council in the summer of 2015. The hotspot approach meant to ‘streamline’, centralise and direct the ‘refugee flow’ and its registration. In the light of the so called ‘*emergency situation*’ (European council, 2015) the council agreed on setting up “*reception and first reception facilities in the frontline Member States, with the active support of Member States’ experts and of EASO, Frontex and Europol to ensure the swift identification, registration and*

fingerprinting of migrants ("hotspots") (European Council 2015, p.3). The discourse of crisis legitimized a intervention of a European security apparatus (Europol, Frontex) in Lesvos, without there being any legal framework for their operation and without checks on the legality of their procedures(Veglio, 2017) From then on, Lesvos became an exceptional space, a space where European security institutions were deployed to control the population, by suspending normal rule of law, legitimized by the declaration of a 'crisis'.

Despite their great effort, European border institutions were unable to 'adequately' manage the refugee 'flow', and migrants were able to continue their journey onwards into the EU. In order to get a firmer grip on the migratory movements into Europe, the Eu- Turkey deal was created. The suspension of 'normal' rule of law that was initiated by the hotspot approach, got a more fixed character by the implementation of the Eu-Turkey deal. The role of the greek island in Eu's border policy dramatically changed as a result of this deal, In short, the Eu Turkey deal consist of 6 key elements:

- 1.All new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek Islands will be returned to Turkey*
- 2. For every Syrian returned to Turkey one Syrian will be resettled in the EU.*
- 3.Turkey will take measures to prevent new sea or land routes for illegal migration opening from Turkey to the EU.*

In 'return' The EU will:

- 4. Disburse Turkey 3 billion Euros in order to improve border security and improve aid for refugees.*
- 5. Lift visa requirements for Turkish citizens*
- 6.relaunching Turkey's EU accession talks*

(Peers, 2016)

Essentially, the deal externalises the European border into Turkey, while at the same time turning the greek islands into a zone where 'conventional' refugee and asylum law and jurisdiction do not apply. the Eu-Turkey Deal and the hotspot approach concentrate border functions on the islands and in Turkey, away from mainland Greece. The Greek island of Lesvos turned into a registration and

deportation centre to which migrants are redistributed from within the greek national territory. Before deportation, border crossers that are stranded on other greek islands like Kos, are brought to the Lesvos detention centre from where they are deported. Hence, the geography of Greece (and thus Europe), with its islands just 15 kilometers away from the Turkish shore, supports 2 different functions; the geography functions both as way to contain people on the island as that it functions as the actual physical border into Europe, with the ever dangerous sea serving as a 'moral alibi'(Doty, 2011) for border policy makers to deny responsibility for the thousand of migrant who died crossing that border.

The legality if the Eu Turkey deal has been questioned by numerous human rights advocates and organisations. Multiple examples show how this deal is violating European and international law. First, European law forbids collective expulsion of foreigners (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Art.19). Something that is happening on a great scale in the name of the deal. Second, most migrants are not given an effective opportunity to make a individual assessed asylum claim, which is a fundamental human right, according to article 14 of the Universal declaration of human rights(United nations) On the basis that Turkey is deemed a safe third country, border-crossers are declared inadmissible in Greece and their cases are not examined. Moreover, Turkey put a geographical limit on the 1967 protocol of the 1951 Geneva convention and consequently does not grant international protection to non-European refugees. In fact, Turkey detains refugees deported from Greece in so called removal centres for 6 to 12 months, as also a recent report from Ulusoy & Battjes (2017) confirms. According to the the 'non-refoulement' principle (Art. 33/1) in the Geneva refugee convention: “ *No Contracting State shall expel or return ('refouler') a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.*” (UN, 1951). However, it is quite clear that the imprisonment of refugees threatens their freedom, so we can claim that deporting refugees to Turkey is a violation of international human rights. The claim that Turkey would be a 'safe third country' that can offer 'sufficient protection' to non-European refugees is absolutely unfounded.

Both new law and the absence of law have created a space in which both severe repression and control, as well as a politics of abandonment can function together at the same time. For the convenience of European leaders and discourse of securing (and defining)the European population, Lesvos has been turned into space that is not- Europe (not European union, to be precise). Suspension of normal rule of law and the juridical indistinction are made possible by the fact that on Lesvos, Europe is suspended. For the execution of Eu's border policy this is essential, Because if Lesvos were still to be Europe, people would still bear human rights and liberties . The construction of Lesvos as an exceptional space, a space that is (temporarily) not Europe, works as an alibi to commit atrocities that violate human rights without consequence. The violent and dehumanizing living conditions in camp Moria, that are addressed in chapter 5, are a clear example of those atrocities.

5. Camp Moria as the materialized exception

I can not again go to Moria, even if i sleep in the street or in the jungle or anywhere, I can not go back to Moria, I want to sleep anywhere but Moria. Because when I go back to Moria, I feel like i'm not living. " (H.)

It's a 25 minute drive along the seashore and into the mediterranean hills to reach camp 'Moria' from the city centre of Mytilene, the capital city of Lesbos . On the way there, we meet groups of people walking to and from the camp, overcoming the scorching Greek heat. It's a strange sight, this camp in the middle of these dry hills, covered with olive trees and nothing else around. We pass a city bus full with bored, overheated and tough looking riot cops on the street that leads us to the entrance of the camp. The big concrete walls, the security and the immense amounts of barbed wire can only make you think of a prison. A somewhat strange contrast to the life around the entrance of the camp, where men and women gather around greek street vendors who are selling fruits and veggies and where small street cafes sell their doner and falafel to people that sit around on plastic chairs talking to their phones or each other. 'A project funded by the European union', is what the sign next to the entrance states. The same sign makes clear that it is strictly prohibited to make photos of the outside of the camp, let alone from the inside. Journalist are not welcome in a one kilometer radius of the camp. We are unable to go inside officially, since we are not carrying the acquired wristband. Meanwhile different people pass us going in and out the gate of the camp; groups of American sounding volunteers, Greek police officers, Dutch doctors, and mainly migrants, who came to Lesbos somewhere in the past 15 months, and who are forced to live inside this camp.

Camp Moria has had many different faces in the past years. The original camp was constructed as a military base and turned into a migrant detention centre. When in the summer 2015 thousand of migrants started to arrive on Lesbos every day and Lesbos was officially marked as a 'hotspot' by the EU, the camp was opened as a registration and transit centre from where migrants could continue their journey into Europe. Since the Eu-Turkey deal the camp mainly functions as a 'filter' and deportation hub, cause while in very specific cases of vulnerability and

admissibility migrants can still be granted (temporary) greek asylum, the great majority of the migrants in Moria will never be allowed to enter the rest of the EU.

In the following chapter I'll try to give an overview of life and the living conditions in Moria, on the basis of my interviews with residents of the camp and my own empirical observations inside the camp. At the same time I'll analyze this data through an Agambian lense, as I have laid out in my theory chapter. I will start with a subchapter describing the procedures of arrival. What happens when someone arrives on Lesbos? How does the registration procedure go, and how does 'registration' fit within a framework of biopolitics? After I try to guide you through the spatiality of the camp. Where is the camp located and what is located within the camp? Bases on observations and testimonies I describe the living conditions in the camp, guided by the three most recurring topics: housing, food and violence.

5.1 Upon arrival at the biometric border

The moment a boat of migrants arrives on Lesbos, they are picked up from the coast by a big Frontex bus and are brought to Moria immediately. At Moria, all migrants are registered. Erfan, a 25 year old Afghan refugee who has been on the island for 12 months, describes this process as follows: "*so we went to the Moria camp and after they registered us in one day, medical people came*"(E.). All 'newcomers' are being held separately and locked in for the first days, as H(age 28) explains: "*The first and second day you stay in the big tent. All people from the boats should be in there, for like two days, you give your fingerprint, and check health, doctor paper, and then you can go somewhere in the camp, find a place and put a tent and live there for .. a long time.*" (H). So For two days migrants are held in the 'first reception centre' and are not allowed to enter the rest of the camp. After these two days they are allowed to enter the rest of the camp but they can still not go outside of the camp for 25 days. "*It's a rule from Moria, that when new arrivals come, that you can not go out of Moria camp until 25 days. Then they give you paper, for around Moria, for police. It's like a police paper. but the control of the Moria gate is not very strong, so I go out*" (H).

From the very beginning that migrants arrive on Lesbos it is made sure that they are identified, photographed, checked and labeled. Before that has happened no one is allowed to leave the camp. The focus on gathering medical and biometric

information such as fingerprints can be considered as a first attempt to strip the migrant body of their humanity. The focus on identification and registration seems to be a conscious and political choice, and by no means a necessity for the wellbeing or safety of anyone. Equally the decision could be made to offer psychological care and a safe and free environment, but that is not the case.

After 25 days, all migrants in Moria camp acquire a identification paper that gives them permission to be on Lesbos. This paper has to be renewed every month at the office in Moria, so officials can easily see what is the status of the migrant; is she still waiting for her interview? Did he have a rejection? Greek police regularly checks papers of migrants walking in Mytilini or anywhere outside of the Moria camp.

The collection of biometric data serves a sovereign state in their desire to classify between who is included and who is excluded. On Lesbos, individuals from certain countries are put in detention immediately upon their arrival, because their chance on a successful asylum claim are considered to be small, and the state is afraid the migrant will try to cross further into Europe irregularly. So, even before any asylum claims are made, the state uses tactics of identification and detention to facilitate a likely deportation. Biometric data will facilitate mass-control over individuals and their movement. In the European context the collection of fingerprints is especially used to regulate 'irregular' migration. The Dublin III² regulation states that migrants can only apply for asylum in the country that they have entered first. This means that one's a migrant has given her fingerprints in Greece, she will not be able to apply for asylum anywhere else in the EU because her fingerprint is in a European database (Eurodac) and will be stored there for 10 years (Ellerman, 2009). This regulation implies that even when migrants are successfully in crossing the inner borders of the EU, it will never lead to a successful asylum claim in the desired country of destination.

² "Dublin system refers to the internal responsibility allocation system of the EU for processing asylum application. It is often referred to as the "rule of first entry" or "one chance rule": the country of first entry is solely responsible for the asylum procedures, and all subsequent asylum applications in another EU member state are automatically voided and the asylum applicant transferred to the country of first entry. The name stems from the Dublin convention of 1990, where these rules were first laid down, and subsequently incorporated into the Common European Asylum System through the Dublin II (2003) and Dublin III (2013) regulations. The main enforcement mechanism is the Eurodac database established in 2003". (Kasperek, 2016)

5.2 Spatiality of Camp Moria

Moria Camp is located a rough 9 kilometers from Mytilini, the capital city of Lesbos (Fig. 1, 2 and 3). It sets in the middle of vast and dry mediterranean hills, filled with olive groves(Fig.4). Moria consists of both an 'open' facility as a detention centre. The majority of the people inhabits the open facility. At the moment of writing (september, 2017) about 5000 people live in the camp that can accommodate 1800 (Smith, 2017). The amount of residents is rising again, for hundreds of border crossers (from Syria and Iraq in particular) arrive on the island every week.

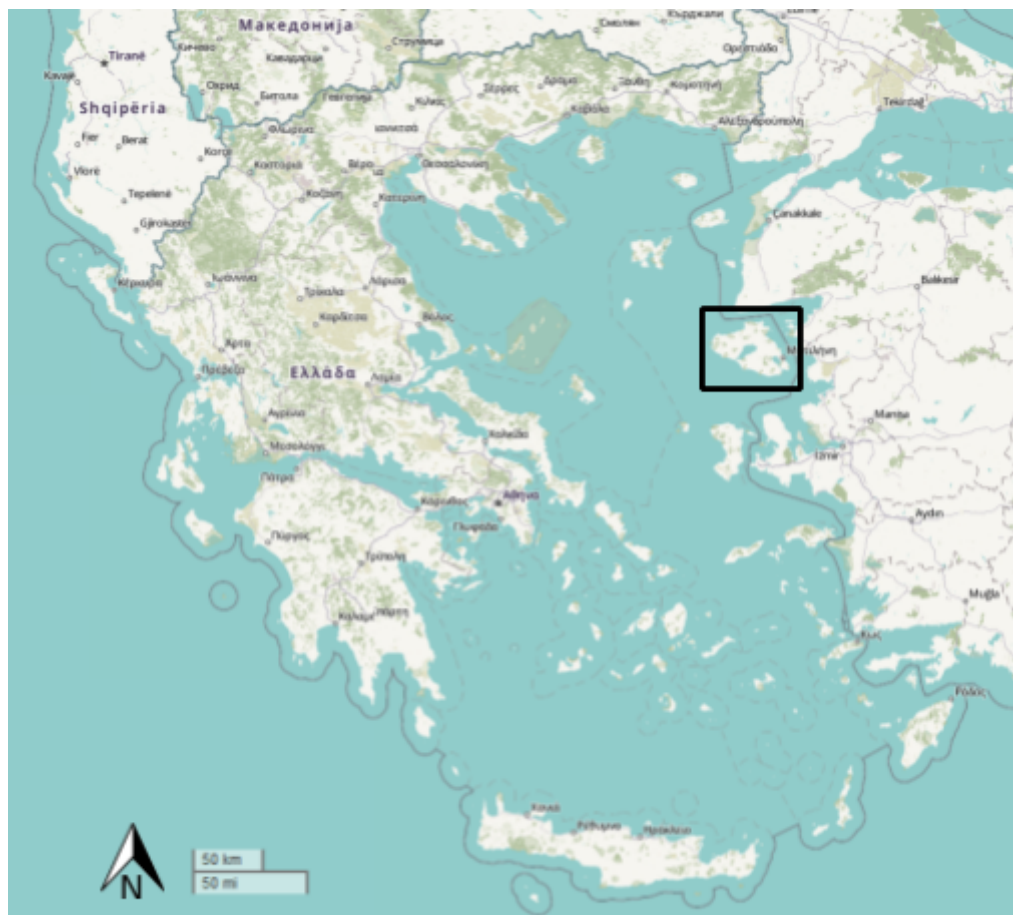


Fig. 1: Greece and its national land and sea borders. (Openstreetmap contributors, 2017)

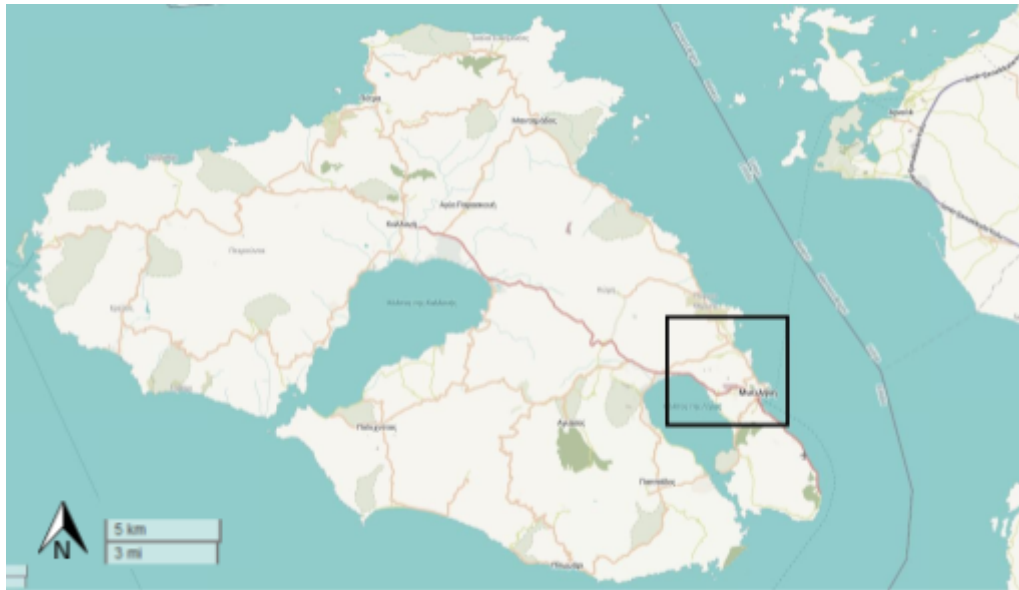


Fig. 2: A map of the island of Lesbos. On the east you can see the Turkish coast and the national border cutting through the sea. (Openstreetmap contributors, 2017)



Fig. 3 :Zoomed in map of Lesbos showing the Mytilini area. In the southeast you can see Lesbos's capital Mytilini. The red dot indicates the location of Moria camp (Openstreetmap contributors, 2017)

The camp has high walls and fences all around. Multiple rows of Razor wire decorate these walls. From how the camp looks, you would start to think that those inside must have done something wrong. There is one entrance where residents can enter, it's guarded by two greek police officers. The security is strict, and will check

all people they suspect not to be residents of the camp for their required wristband. Most non-white people however, have no difficulties walking in and out without the guards checking if they belong in the camp or not.

Together with help of a few residents inside, I have made my way into the camp through a hole in the fence somewhere in the back of the camp. Inside the camp I managed to walk around freely pretending to be one of the volunteers working there. I managed to observe the camp and make photos with some help of my 'guide'.

The camp consist of different sections with 'housing facilities', some of those sections are separated from each other by a razor wired double fence(figure 5). To enter a section residents need to show their wristband to Euro Relief volunteers sitting at the section gate. Erfan, a 26 year old afghan man who has been on Lesbos since april 2016 explains: *"we have a wristband that shows our number, that we live in that tent on that level and everytime we want to go inside and go out, we have to show that wristband to them"*. Each section has their own wristband. Nationalities are segregated by these sections, although some 'groups' (like Africans), are put together by this racialized divide.



Fig 4: Camp Moria from a distance. (Heinig, 2017)



Fig. 5: Razor wired fence segregating two sections in Moria. In the left image the razor wire is used to dry wet clothes on. (left: H. 2017 & right: Lesbos solidarity 2017))

Inside the camp, the Asylum office is located. The greek asylum office, supported by the EASO(the European asylum support office) has a double fence around it. 5 rows of razor wire wind up and in between this fence. A 'sluice' in the fence is guarded. A row of around 15 people is waiting for their appointment in front of the sluice(Figure 6). When one person's leaves the facility, the guard lets one other person go in. The people in this cue have been waiting long very their interview, sometimes more than a year.



Fig. 6: People waiting to enter the asylum office area in front of the guarded 'sluice'. (H. 2017)

Me and my camp 'guide' continue our walk through the camp. I ask him if that building with that particularly high fence around it is maybe the entrance of the detention center in the camp, he answers - to my surprise - that the building we are looking at is the 'first reception center' (Fig.7). The place is a big tent where new arrivals on the island are placed and detained for a minimum of 2 days. Erfan explained to me how also he was surprised by all the fence: *"when we arrived in Moria.. first we saw a lot of fence.. i really hate fence. it's so big.. why does Europe put refugees inside the fence? Inside this fence?"*. Inside this fence new arrivals are registered, medically checked, fingerprinted and provided with some basic needs like food and blankets. At the the fence of this reception center, I see two people I assume to be lovers holding hands through the fence, crying. One of them just survived the dangerous sea crossing from Turkey to Lesvos, now still separated by this fence.



Fig. 7: Fenced entrance of 'first reception center'. (H. 2017)

Next to the First reception center, unaccompanied minor are detained in a detention facility for minors. Unaccompanied minors are detained in a separate part of the camp upon arrival - 'for their own protection'-. I somehow expected it be a more welcoming or friendly place, but again, the razor wired fence also dominates this picture. Unaccompanied minors are officially regarded as vulnerable and have the right to protection. There is a program that locates unaccompanied minor to shelters on the mainland of Greece. However, with only 1223 places in specialized shelters for minors and around double that amount of unaccompanied minors in Greece(Pro asyl, July 2017), hundreds of them are stuck in detention facilities. The prospect of being detained makes many minors lie about their age when they are registered. Something that often negatively influences their future asylum process because it makes their 'files' inconsistent.

We continue our walk towards the place where the food is provided. It is past dinner time, so no one is there now. The place looks like a queuing area for a ride in an attraction park. Hundreds of meters of a single long lane snaking towards the point where food is distributed. Closer to the distribution point, 'zigzags' are

separated by a high fence, so people waiting for food are caged in between fences and cannot jump the line

The camp is overcrowded with its capacity of 1800 people, so besides the tents, containers and 'spontaneous' structures in the camp, there is also a small encampment that is set up right next to the camp Moria. This camp right outside Moria's walls is set up by the UNHCR. When I asked the volunteer that was present there what function this camp has I got the answer that this camp works to manage the 'overflow' of the camp. Residents of this encampment that I have talked to said that although the conditions in this little camp are equally abominable, it does offer a little bit more privacy and 'air to breath', in contrast to being confined inside of the Moria walls. The police is not permanently present in this little camp, although there is a volunteer of Euro-relief permanently there to react to people's needs (according to the volunteer himself). Ali, a Nigerian man whom I gave a right to the city of Mytilini later, explained to me how he believes the volunteers of Euro-relief are just there to keep an eye on them.

5.2.2 Locality

The location of the camp reveals something about how spatiality is integrated and utilized by the European and Greek border policy. First, the island itself functions as containment facility just through that essential geographical feature of any island: it's surrounded by water. While the pressure on the local residents increases and the local authorities are unable to provide adequate living conditions for migrants, the authorities do not consider to move people to the mainland of Greece, since they are afraid people will try to make their way further into Europe or into illegality in Greece. Therefore it is in great interest of European policy makers to keep migrants concentrated on Lesbos.

The location of the camp on the island itself isolates and concentrates migrants at one place, just far enough from the capital city of Mytilene to prevent the camp's residents to easily walk to and from the center, while still being in proximity of the services and infrastructure that the city has to offer for those who have vehicles. The police, the jail, the harbour, the court, the hotel where Frontex employees are stationed; All essential features of the deportation apparatus are near enough to

function properly. This is then, what Agamben called an inclusive exclusion. The concentration of migrants in Moria, consistently excluded migrants from the rest of greek society. migrants are, quite literally, excluded from the *polis* by concentrating them in another space. At the same time, does that active exclusion also reveal an *inclusion* in the sovereign rule. Police, asylum officers, Frontex- All of them are actively performing exactly those sovereign politics that *define* the population, in a state that enabled that performance by deactivation of conventional legal determinations.

5.3 Conditions in the camp and the production of bare life

5.3.1 Housing and facilities

Moria Camp is divided in different sections, which are called '*levels*' by its residents. The hill on which the camp is build is terraced and each section is located on a different terrace (fig. 8). Resident of the camp also relate to this levels as one that indicates a certain quality of living. The 'housing facilities' between the sections in Moria camp vary quite a lot. After the harsh winter of 2016/2017, where seven people died in Moria camp, several so called 'iso-boxes'(have been placed in the camp. A small section of the camp consists of these insulated containers with air conditioning, which sometimes houses more than 40 people per container (of 46 m²). Still, the conditions in the iso boxes are a lot better than those in others sections of the camp. Some Other sections have long tubular tent like structures (fig 9.), housing up to 20 people. These windowless structures are not isolated and become very warm in summers and very cold in winter. Other sections consist of big tents with rows of bunk beds. In between all the sections, on the 'streets', in between shelters and in the corners of the camp, there are hundreds of people living(including families with young children) in little 'camping' tents(Fig. 10) and self constructed tents from canvas, tarps and unhcr blankets supported by ropes and poles.



Fig 8: Different levels in camp Moria (Lesvos solidarity, November 2017)



Fig. 9: Rows of tubular tents in Camp moria. (H. 2017)



Fig.10: Makeshift shelters and 'Camping' tents in between other housing facilities in camp Moria. (Lesvos solidarity, November 2017)

While there is a difference in quality of the housing facilities, they are all similar in being heavily overcrowded. Being cramped up together in a small space for months or years, whether that is in a tent or a container, has turned out to be a dehumanizing experience for all those I spoke to. *"There is nothing good in Moria. (...)You have to be there to understand what i am saying. We came from our country and now we are in a place with 15 languages, its very hard. You cannot understand people, you cannot speak with them. It's exactly like a prison. When you wake up in the morning. You think you are in a prison.. Its very hard. (...)We was living in a small tent in Moria. Not even a container. It was raining and snowing. It was very hard. No it's not good with 30 person with 3000 dreams. You must put your headphones on your head and finish your time everyday(...) Now it is a little bit better than the past. But we have problems even now. After fire in the camp, after people who dies. They think they have to bring people to more*

comfortable places like the containers. But they put 30 persons in one container. Its very hard to live.”(H.) I was in there in the camp, just a couple of times for a couple of hours, and indeed I understood what he was saying. A tense crowd, a multitude of languages and misunderstandings, barbed wire wherever you look, this camp is an oppressive environment. Especially The winter of 2016-2017 has had a big traumatizing impact on those who were living in Moria then. Seven people died that winter of carbon dioxide poisoning because they were heating their tents with fires or improvised heating devices to keep themselves warm. *“They provided us some tents, some small tent that you go to if.. I don’t know, if you are traveling you have those kind of tent you know, they are not completely for living, for a long time, they were about 4 meter tents, and near to 15 people would sleep in those tents, in the middle of the winter you know.”(Erfan).* The cold weather and the bad conditions forced people to improvise to get warm.” *sometimes to keep warm we go into the Forest, and bring tree so we make big fire to keep warm sometimes. A very bad situation, superb bad”(kos).* During those winter months, Electricity and water often stopped functioning. *“Well there were no good showers.. sometimes no water, in the cold in december, when there was snow. There was no hot water, very cold. Sometimes we make a fire and put water and heat the water and we use it to take a shower inside in the tent... a shower in tent that’s really funny.”(K.)*

Still now, sanitary facilities are extremely poor. Residents all tell me how few toilets and showers there are and the ones that are there are extremely filthy, something I also witnessed with my own eyes (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11: filthy bathroom facility in Moria camp. (H. 2017 & Lesbos Solidarity, 2017)

Sections

Different nationalities are segregated by the sections. As a consequence of the difference of the quality of the housing facilities, certain groups feel discriminated inside the camp. Erfan explained to me: *“ You know as I told you there is a big discrimination between the refugees in Moria camp you know, they live in camp separated on different levels you know. Now this moment in June, there is some iso boxes, they have AC and their condition is kind of better and also there is some tents. And the Syrian people live in a separate level, with a level I mean there is some fenced around that level, or those (a certain) kind of tents. and there is some ‘protector’ , and the euro relief people do it. And we have a wristband that shows our number, that we live in that tent on that level and everytime we want to go inside and go out, we have to show that wristband to them and now on the afghan level in camp, you know, i’m Afghan. we are just living in those tents again, and those tents are for Afghans now, and all nations in the camp, the Syrian, the Iranian, the Arabic, all the people have that iso boxes. which are very very better than those kind of tents, so what is this discrimination between refugees you know. Why the Syrian people can live in those boxes, but not us?” (Erfan)*

The issue of discrimination comes back more often in interviews, also respondent A. Told me how he feels some sections in the camp are favoured over others when it

comes down to distribution of resources: *"When blanket is coming, it's going to iso box where there are families. All blankets are going there. when I go to euro relief for blanket, they don't give me"*(A.) These feelings of being disadvantaged, whether grounded or not, create tension inside the camp, mainly between different nationalities. Even though the clustering of national, cultural or linguistic groups would presumably happen also if they were not coordinated from above, the organized segregation by nationality facilitates feelings of being disadvantaged and hinders inter-national encounter, organization and communication. A consequence that is not necessarily negative for the camp its 'management' because it causes division among its residents. So instead of turning to the management when residents protest poor conditions in the camp, residents are played off against each other.

The segregation by nationality also facilitates police actions inside the camp. One day after a peaceful protest for freedom of movement(July 18, 2017), in which mainly people from the sub-saharan refugee community participated, the police raided an African section of the camp, arresting people they claimed to identify as the 'leaders' of the protest. These people are in prison to this day. Similarly does the segregation facilitate the deportations regime; Whenever someone's asylum claim is rejected, the police only has to enter and search in that area in the camp that is the designated area for that certain nationality. These examples show how the specific spatiality of the camp - of segregated nationalities - provides the condition in which a system of control can work efficiently.

5.3.2 Food

The topic of food comes back more than often when talking about camp Moria. It is a sensitive topic, also - or especially- for the residents themselves, because complaining about the food would imply you are not happy or 'grateful' for the support you get. 'You should be grateful for what you get ' is an often heard reaction to complaints about food. Residents of the camp are aware of this sensitivity, and even tell me how they *'really are happy'* with what they get. Still, the food and the distribution thereof remains highly problematic for the camp's residents.

As I explained before, in order to get food, the residents have to queue up in one long line. Fences separate this zigzagging lane and it is in this cage that people have to

stand in for hours a day waiting for a little bit of food. Erfan explained to me what a day of food distribution looks like: *“The food distribution in the camp: we have 3 basic meals and one of them is the breakfast, it starts at 7.30 and they just give us one small fruit juice, and a normal cake, a small cake, nothing more for breakfast. If we wanted to get this food we had to wake up at 6;30 or 7 in the morning and just go to the line, and stand for 1 hour or 1,5 hours, under observation of many police there. They just insult us in the camp completely, they were just like : Malaka, malaka!³ That’s what they told us, it’s a insulting word in greek language, and we had to stay in line for at least one hour to just get one juice and small cake. and then for the lunch it started at 1;30 , and the same there, we had to stay in line and even more than one hour, cause all the people had woken up for the lunch, and for the dinner, it started at 5 or 5;30 and it was the same”*(Erfan)

The long food queues result in the fact that people are waiting in line for a big part of the day. The conditions in which people have to wait for food are absolutely dehumanizing(Fig. 12). Standing in line in between fences, guarded by police, like *animals* in a cage. Also children are waiting in this line for food.



Fig. 12: Lining up for food distribution in Moria camp. (H. 2017)

During the most crowded times in the camp, when the number of residents was highest(as like it is now at the moment of writing in october 2017) the waiting times for food were so long, people did nothing else then standing in line all day: *“we had to wake up at 6, to get food at 9 or 10 o’clock and then we again had to go to line for*

³ An often used Greek slang invective meaning ‘wanker’.

in 11 or 12, to get food 3 o'clock and then again we had to go at 6 o'clock, and at 8 or 9 o'clock we got the food". (F.) F. is not the only one I speak to who expresses his resentment about the waiting in line for food everyday, A. a man from Pakistan that now lives in one of the squatted buildings in Mytilini explains to me: "It's a very strange life in Moria (...) yes.. standing in line. When I get breakfast. When line is finished. then I again stay in line for lunch. When lunch line is finished then I again stay for dinner! 9 to 10 hour i'm in line for food."(A.).

One of my respondents asked me, how this is possible in the 21st century in Europe. I could not answer. In my own experiences with cooking for masses of people at protest camps, I know it is not that hard to cook nutritious food for thousands of people, even with little resources. Also the distribution can happen fast and smoothly. How can this camp -'epicenter' of the so called European refugee crisis - not be able to adequately cook and distribute food?

"This is Europe! you know it's like 'the world'. They don't have the possibility to feed 3 or 4000 people? For sure they can. Im sure that if they want, they can bring a lot of change. So the people don't have to stay in the line for food or we don't have to live in tents. But only if they want. I can not do anything. I'm calling... i'm human, you are human. I came in this place, i'm not in the position to complain, if they give me food I'm happy and I say thanks. I can not say anything.(F.)

Without a doubt, the waiting in line functions as disciplinary mechanism, when the waiting becomes an integral part of life in Moria. A mechanism that tries to convey: 'You are here now, you follow our rules and you wait in line in these conditions and you better be grateful for it'. Residents have no choice but to go and stand in that line and wait for their food. They need to survive.

Residents of the camp are officially not allowed to cook for themselves, although the police tends to turn a blind eye sometimes. In the camp I see some improvised stoves (Fig.13) and people preparing food albeit the fact that the cooking regime is still ambivalent. *"Yes people are cooking. and some families are cooking. The guys are cooking outside of this. They get some wood and make woodfire and then is cooking self, but is not allowed." (A.).*



Fig. 13: A makeshift 'kitchen' in Moria camp (Heinig, 2017)

Other residents tell that they have been punished for cooking inside Moria. However, going outside the camp to cook is also not an option because police does not allow residents of the camp to hang out outside of the camp (except for near the entrance of the camp). F. says: *"Police beat me because they say: why you make food inside Moria? with fire inside Moria..? I say I don't like your food so I make it for myself.. but then again they say: never make food inside! If you don't eat the food here I don't care but don't make inside. So then I go outside to make food but then again they make more problem that i'm outside. They say: Why you go outside? you go inside!"*(F.). Inside the camp the police also regularly checks the tents of the residents:

" Yes.. they [Police] check the tents. Before when my friends are living in Moria, they cook their own food. They check the tent and they have some small knife for cutting some vegetables. Police finds knife and sends this guy to prison in Moria for one week. They say you can check it, i'm cooking for myself here, for me. Cause in food line it's not possible to get the food. They say: No, cooking is not allowed."(A.)

In is mainly in the conversations about food, that residents bring up the the figure of the 'the animal' . Residents of the camp talk about being looked upon and

treated as animals. Erfan says: *“That kind of staying in line, and be given that food, It was not for a human. I told you, when I arrived here, I felt humanity completely, because the first day I arrived here they helped me too much, and I just felt very safe, I thought, now I’m in a country that is safe but when I saw that line, that food, the insulting police and the camp, those kind of tents, the euro relief system... I felt like there is no humanity in Europe also. I was completely disappointment, I lost my hope”*(E). Also F. a 24 year old man from Pakistan, describes very clearly how he feels the police treats him as an animal: *“But in Moria they give food.. and i don’t know who makes food .. but I see 2 or 3 time.. there is inside a small animal (insect)..So I gave this to police.. I say: You see I am human.. I never ate this food. He says no there is no problem.. you go and eat. There is no problem...but that’s a big problem for me.. cause they say this to an animal.. not to a human.(F)”*. This animalization is not ‘only a feeling’ that residents express, I believe we can recognize it as an instrument of sovereign power. An instrument that is used to legitimise a policy that lacks standards and deprives the residents of rights because they don't have to be treated as humans should be treated. This animalization start with putting people in a overcrowded barbed wire facility, and tell them this is ‘their’ place. F. *“Why they say go back to Moria..? if people live in another way.. why is that a problem? You know.. i’m a human.. not an animal. You know.. they say: this place is only for you, one room is only for you.. and you can never go to another room. They say: Other people are human, but you are an animal. You can never go outside, you live inside. And they close the door.”*(F.). . ‘The animalized other ‘ creates a subject that is not really human, and therefore does not have to be treated as such. Animalization I believe, can be understood as an Agambian biopolitical production of bare life. This is a something the resident of the camp also recognize and actively resist, not only because they want to be treated humanely but because they realize it is a tactic to deprive them of a political voice and means for struggle. Cause a bare life can be exposed to sovereign violence and exceptional practises, for it is not fully human. The sovereign can make the division about who is and belongs to the human species, and therefore can decide who will be included and excluded in the community.

5.3.3 Concerning violence

Moria camp is a violent place. It is one of the main reasons residents detest the place. The violence comes comes from different actors and happens for very

different reasons. First and foremost, I believe it's important to recognize that creation of the camp itself is an act of sovereign violence, localizing people in space, exposed to violence, in degrading conditions and deprived of rights.

The precarious position of the residents make them fight over resources like food or blankets. Bureaucratic discrimination and the feeling of being disadvantaged is often the reason that tensions rise between different (national) groups. The small space the 5000 residents are forced to share, is a breeding ground for rivalry and conflict. Fights often happen over 'small' disputes but then grow into a bigger conflict between two or more groups with a different national background. (H.) explains: *"Yes we have many fights in Moria. Even last night there was a fight between West Africans and Algerian people. Because it's a small, small place and many people living there."*(H.)

The segregated living by nationality, the different living conditions and asylum procedures for each of these groups nourish the tension between those groups. Most people in the camp however are sick of these outburst of violence. A. Explains how he suffered from having to live in this violent atmosphere: *"I don't like to see fights, cause my problem related to fights in Iran. They killed me in the prisons. When I see a fight between two men or two human. My mind goes back to the past and i don't feel good"*(A.)

Residents I talked to hate the violence, but also see where this violence is rooting. Erfan explained it to me in this way: *"Actually, those kind of fights, they are mostly between. I don't know, just 2 nations, the Afghan with the Syrian, or the Syrian with the black people, they are like war, not just a small fight, and maybe it's kind of our fault that we have these kind of fights and war in the camp, but we should I think, go through the details, from where does this aggression come from? and I think that - I'm here now for 1 year you know - and I'm tired of everything, and if one of my friends tells me something and I can not tolerate it. I start a war. Because i'm tired of everything in this camp, there is no food, no toilet no shower. imagine there is just 10 toilet for 5000 people, 10 showers together with toilet, and they are very dirty, just 10 shower for 5000 people you know. and all the people are tired of these kind of things, So they are very intolerant and they are very impatient, so those kind of wars start in the camp and every week or every day there is these kind of fights or wars in the camp."*

The mental health condition of many of the camp's residents is severe. A. elaborates on his own experiences in Moria: *"Because people feel mental here... all people think: 'they will send me back and not give me paper to travel to athens and go other countries. They send me back' A lot of people feel crazy and I meet some people that now have treatment because they have serious mental problem. Because these guys are always separated in Moria, they don't have company, don't have friends. and then these guys are alone there. Only have time to think about problems. Make yourself crazy"*(A.) In a recent report from Doctors without borders, they are talking of a 'mental health emergency' (Medecins Sans frontiere, october 2017). Most resident have fled war and have been exposed to violence, both in their home country as on their journey through Turkey. The current living condition in the camp only further deteriorate their mental health condition. 'People go crazy in the camp' is what I often hear from residents. *"Because they are long time here. And they go crazy.. because too much people are here for a long time.. and they are like crazy.. their minds are not working. Maybe some people also like fighting.. but not all people like fight.. so they don't want fights..(F.)* E. adds to that: *"They just go bananas, they go out of control. Because we are very tired of this situation in Moria camp. and this Lesvos island."*(Erfan).

However, Outbursts of violence are definitely not always a result of 'people just going crazy' and is not happening between two national groups in the camp. Violence is often a result of frustration boiling over and is then directed to the camp and its authorities itself itself. Riots, arson, violent protests have all happened repeatedly in the last year in Moria. I will briefly analyze these actions in chapter 6; resistance and contesting the borders of the camp.

5.4 Organisation of the camp

5.4.1 'Euro relief' and Humanitarianism as a reproduction of a social order

".. Humanitarian organizations -- which today are more and more supported by international commissions -- can only grasp human life in the figure of bare or sacred life, and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight". Agamben (1998, p85)

Politically, the responsibility of Moria camp is in the hands of the greek interior ministry. However, The actual - day to day - management of the camp, is in the hands of the Greek police. In the camp, the Greek asylum service operates (with support of the EASO) in a separate, fenced of section of the camp. The asylum service operates under the greek ministry of migration, just as the first reception and identification centre inside camp Moria.

Before the Eu-Turkey deal, a multitude of non-governmental organisations were active in the camp, providing support services like medical aid and food distribution. When the Eu-Turkey was implemented in march 2016, many NGOs (such as Medecins sans frontier, Oxfam, Save The Children) stopped providing services inside the camp as they disapproved of the changing nature of the camp. After the signing of the deal, the Head of 'Medecins sans frontiere Greece' Marie Elisabeth Ingres, released the following statement: *"We will not allow our assistance to be instrumentalized for a mass expulsion operation(..)We refuse to be part of a system that has no regard for the humanitarian or protection needs of asylum seekers and migrants."* (MSF, March 2016). A fierce and strikingly political statement for a humanitarian organisation. An organisation that would usually stay far from political action (or activism) and politically charged statements. The withdrawal of most of the NGO meant that the greek police stepped in and was forced to take on responsibility for the conditions in the camp and the wellbeing of its residents.

The camp increasingly militarized and the conditions in the camp deteriorated drastically after the Eu-Turkey deal. Originally, the camp was supposed to become a closed detention facility after the deal. After some weeks however, when it turned

out that the deal did not yet stop people from crossing the border, this detention policy was lifted and people could again leave the premises of the camp after a 25 day registration and identification period.

Not all NGOs left the camp after the Eu Turkey deal. 'Euro Relief', a American, Mormon relief organisation stayed in the camp, and got a central role in the organisation of the camp. This organisation now is the biggest and most important organisation that is active in the camp. They basically care for most of the day to day services like there are: food distribution, distribution of non-food materials(clothing, blankets, sanitary products etc), housing allocation in the camp. They also sit at the entrance of each section, checking people's wristbands when they want to enter a section.

To be clear, I have not intensively investigated this organisation or interviewed any of its volunteers. Nevertheless, during my stay on Lesbos; 'euro relief' was a topic that came up almost everyday in my work alongside migrants. I have briefly spoken to some of the volunteers and I have seen them working in and outside the camp. I must admit that initially, I was also quite surprised to hear of this Mormon organisation playing such a vital role in the organisation of the camp. Erfan stresses the power this organisation has in the camp: *" They provide everything in the camp. They are really powerful in the camp, they distribute clothes, food, shoes and they provide the tents the blankets, bags, everything that a refugee need(Erfan)*. For everything that residents of the camp need, he or she needs to ask Euro Relief. F. adds to that : *"first they register you and then once a month they give you clothes, and they are at the gate of the section. Opening and closing the door. They arrange the camp (F.)"*. The relationship between the residents of the camp and volunteers seems to be slightly ambiguous. Some resident of the camp tell me they believe most volunteers 'mean well', but they are at the same time critical on their position in the camp and the way they handle the distribution of goods. The volunteers of this organisation are almost the only people 'from the outside' that the residents get to interact with and the residents are highly dependent on them.

"As I prepare to go to Lesbos, the most important thing I need is your prayers. My prayer for me and my fellow workers is "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of

your steadfast love and your faithfulness!" (Ps. 115:1) Please pray that many in Lesbos would come to hope in Jesus, despite their desperate and needy situation because I know "my God will supply every need...according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19) Pray for our safety and peace within the camp as well, because the situation in Moria has been tense over the last few months, with riots, hunger strikes, and even arson in the camp. Pray that Euro Relief would continue to find favor with the Greek government, and that our ministry there would give testimony to the loving kindness to us shown to us by Jesus Christ"

(A euro relief volunteer on the crowdfunding website of her 'mission trip', 2017)

"The people in charge in the camp, the euro relief organisation that is volunteering with helping the refugees"(E.)

Euro Relief is a christian organisation, an Ngo that is *"based on Christian values and ethics, values that come from the Bible."* The organisation expects all of its volunteers to *"respect and apply those values in all our activities"* and volunteers have to go to a mandatory bible study, every week. : *"Apart from the orientation training, there will be some informal training related to biblical truth in the form of mandatory Bible study once per week"* (Euro Relief, personal communication , July 2017) The Christian background of the organisation raises suspicion with many of the camp's residents. There have been numerous reports of Euro Relief volunteers trying to convert residents by spreading St.john gospels with conversion forms inside stating *"I know I'm a sinner ... I ask Jesus to forgive my sins and grant me eternal life. My desire is to love and obey his word."* (Patrick kingsley, the Guardian, 2017). Euro Relief has, however, disapproved of these actions. The Euro Relief code of conduct states the following about evangelisation: *" Evangelization, or the personal sharing of our faith with others, may be done only with someone that you have developed a relationship with and who is interested in hearing what you have to say."*(personal communication, July 2017). However, according to H., a resident of the camp Many volunteers do have their own religious agenda: *"People from euro relief, did not come to help the people, they have a certain goal, like sharing a religious idea, because they are Christian, and they ask some*

people to convert to Christianity and try to change the mind of people to change from Muslim to Christian. (...) and when we talk with them, they mostly invite you to talk about their religion.”(H.) In the same conversation, K. another resident of Moria camp added to that : *“They sometime asked me and say like, if you don’t have any good case for your interview, you can change your religion and then they give you a good reason for why you leave your country” (K.).*

Residents of the camp speak not only of Euro Relief volunteer trying to convert them, but are also suspicious of their powerful role inside the camp: *“They see they are helping the refugees but they are just thinkin about their benefits. I think there are no organisations that are solving problems in Moria. (H.).* Some residents of the camp go even further in their accusations: *“And euro relief uses the people from the camp for the things that euro relief want, like intelligence, spies..”(K)”. Euro Relief as ‘spies’, an accusation to be taken seriously considering what their role is in the camp. Volunteer workers act -according to my respondents- as the eyes and ears of the police. Their constant presence in the camp, gives them power because they have a lot of information about the residents. Who has not shown up at the gate of the section in the last days? Who are ‘troublemakers’? who started that fight? Where does that resident sleep of whom the asylum claim is rejected? Euro Relief gives police and asylum services access to this information, without them having to be present in the camp. Euro Relief seems to have become part of the infrastructure that enables a strict camp regime, detention and deportation.*

Apart from this specific example of the practises of the christian humanitarianism from euro relief, I Believe it's also of importance to analyze humanitarian support in Moria camp from another perspective. A perspective, perhaps more ‘Agambian’, that offers a more fundamental critique on the biopolitical roots of humanitarian support. While after the Eu-Turkey deal many NGOs have showed a new ‘politicized’ face, humanitarianism holds the name to be ‘neutral’ and impartial. Humanitarian ideology suggest to alleviate all human suffering and to provide independent aid for those ‘in need’. Providing basic needs like food, shelter and healthcare, particularly in emergency situations. Humanitarian aid as in Moria camp supposedly functions outside of any political context. The support is *stripped of* all things political, exclusively focussed on the suffering (biopolitical?) body. Euro Relief’s ‘slogan’, which is the first thing you see

when opening their website, symbolize that statement. It reads: "*compassion for the suffering*". Euro Relief cares for all suffering bodies that inhabit the territory of the camp, 'ruling' over them with the biopolitical power of care. In the camp they keep exact data of things like who is living where in the camp and who has the right to receive new clothes or a blanket that day. Humanitarian aid groups as Euro Relief are so to say, *managing life* inside the camp, turning residents of the camp into the biopolitical subject of their governance. The organisation of Moria leaves no room for agency of its residents. A. explains how there are strict rules for all the inhabitants of the camp: "*Inside Moria you don't have your decisions. Only Moria decisions. Its: Nononono it's not allowed here. you must go in your tent*".(A)

The social relationships between humanitarian aid workers in the camp and its residents, are a reproduction of the social structure produced by sovereign authority. A humanitarian reproduction of '*bare life*', that stripped down life of which only its purest biological functions need attention. They are part of the same infrastructure as the police, the asylum office workers and the Frontex deportation officer. When working in this biopolitical space of the camp-under the same biopolitical *modus operandi*- claiming neutrality seems to be a delusion.

This Agambian perspective is valuable because it recognizes how even well meant action -of possibly good hearted volunteers- is problematic in the environment of the camp, because their actions become part of the same infrastructure of biopolitical control. Thereby contributing to the conservation and the reproduction of *bare life*. F. described it in his way: "*.. they are nice people you know.. they had a smile. But even that made me feel bad you know, why should there be a situation in which people give me free food..*".(F)

However, this perspective also fails to recognize other aspects of humanitarian Aid. First of all, last years have shown that (some) humanitarian aid organisations like Medecins sans frontiere started to shift from their neutral and impartial position to the recognition of the fact that they are working in a political context. Moreover, some of these organisations are actually taking a position in that context. This might give room for those organisation to work outside of that biopolitical infrastructure, avoiding to become part of it themselves. Secondly, does the Agambian approach also fail to recognize more individual and interpersonal approaches and actions of aid workers, that might not fit within that structure that is producing bare life.

Honestly human encounters, building of relationships, diversity, critical volunteers, are things that are not in the range of view of the Agambian perspective. Honestly, these are also not things I could find in the camp, nor did the people I've been working alongside with on Lesbos emphasize any of those things happening or existing in the camp. Still, it seems to be most honest to keep an open mind towards their possibility. As F. a long term resident of the camp beautifully stated: *"Some organisation have some people with a good heart, and then they are helping. Others are not helping you know.. it's not all people. 5 fingers are not the same, they are different. And all people are not the same, they are different."*(F.)

5.4.2 Police, the temporary sovereign

"In Moria.. it's not, it's not a human place. Really. it's not a respecting place. it's a jail. Moria is a jail. there is the rules, and you only follow the rules, bad rules"(A.).

In front of Camp Moria, a bus full of police in riotgear is parked permanently. During my visit inside the camp, I saw groups of military police casually walking in up and down the 'streets' of Moria. At the gates, around the asylum office and at the food distribution point, police is permanently present. Still, police is not *omnipresent* in the camp, their presence is limited to the places where they apparently find it most necessary. The rest of the places where some kind of surveillance is required are positioned by Euro Relief volunteers.

"I think that.. well the police in Greece they are just like fascist, like nationalist people and they don't want to help us, they don't want to do anything good for us. They only want to do something bad for us so that we become bored in here"(K.).

The prominent role of the police inside the camp is dubious. On the one hand they are primarily responsible for the organization of the camp and the wellbeing of its residents, while on the other hand being a repressive force inside that camp. The greek police, known for having strong ties with the greek Neo-nazi party 'Golden dawn' (BBC, 2012; Al Jazeera, 2012; Amnesty international, 2014; The guardian, 2012) is no ally of the camp's residents. Repeatedly respondent tell me how the police is insulting them, shouting insults when for example they are waiting in line

for food: *They just insult us in the camp completely, they were just like : Malaka, malaka!*⁴ *That's what they told us, it's a insulting word in greek language"(Erfan).* The police is trying to maintain a certain 'order' in the camp but that does not mean in is there to maintain some kind of security for its residents. H. gives a clear analysis on what the police is doing inside the camp: *"Police..? Well everywhere else the police work is keeping the life and the security of the people. But in Moria it's very different, the police only attacks people when a fight is happening. We didn't see police when the fire was happening, we didn't see police when the people die of the cold and we don't see police when people steal something. But when in the food line someone goes before someone else.. the police attacks them. Police only here for waiting at the gate, for the beauty and the show."*(H.)

Instead of the protection of the people inside the camp , The police in camp Moria acts according to what is most safe and convenient for them .*".. Before i see one fight.. i was in Moria.. I see that police sees the fight. And they go outside. They never say: stop the fight.. or go outside.. No they go outside and the guys can beat everyone. Police does not come inside and stop fight. They save themselves.. they never save refugees.. then there's a problem.(farooq)"*. While the police does not interfere in internal fighting between residents , they do however come into the camp to respond to protest happening against the condition in the camp. On July 17, 2017 a protest of the sub saharan refugee community was violently beaten down by riot cops after disrupting the protest with teargas. Footage of the protest shows shows police forces charging into the protest using extreme violence on people protesting (Cassel, 2017). The indistinct legal situation and the fact that this camp, closed for journalist and cameras, is isolated far from the rest of Europe, make it easier for these kind of atrocities to occur. Conventional law is blurred and legal rights and protection becomes the responsibility of a police force that can act as an temporary sovereign.

⁴ An often used Greek slang invective meaning 'wanker'.

5.5.2 Arbitrary Detention and juridical indistinction

A specific area of Moria camp remains a closed detention centre. A few hundred people stay in this closed facility, which has a official capacity of 210 person. According to greek and international law (*European reception conditions Directive*, 2003) , the state can keep migrants who are awaiting the procedure of their asylum claim in detention on the following grounds: (a) *in order to determine his or her identity or nationality*; (b) *in order to determine those elements on which the application for international protection is based which could not be obtained otherwise, in particular when there is a risk of absconding of the applicant*; (c) *when it is ascertained on the basis of objective criteria, including that he or she already had the opportunity to access the asylum procedure, that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the applicant is making the application for international protection merely in order to delay or frustrate the enforcement of a return decision, if it is probable that the enforcement of such a measure can be effected*; (d) *when he or she constitutes a danger for national security or public order*; (e) *when there is a serious risk of absconding of the applicant, in order to ensure the enforcement of a transfer decision according to the Dublin III Regulation*. (Asylum information database, 2016 p.120)

In practise this means basically any migrant can be put in detention, and the general assumption of migrants I spoke to in and outside the prison is that detention is very arbitrary. As stated above, The grounds for detention that are written down in the *European reception conditions Directive* allows the state to imprison people when there are: “reasonable grounds to believe that the applicant is making the application for international protection merely in order to delay or frustrate the enforcement of a return decision”. However, What is meant with ‘reasonable grounds’ isn't clarified, which gives Greek and European officials the freedom to imprison anyone who legally tries to fight its first asylum rejection or admissibility status. In practise, this means that people who try to appeal their rejection might end up in detention because they are accused of trying to ‘delay their decision’. Furthermore, there have been numerous reports of local, legal support organisations and Ngos⁵ of forced deportations of persons with still pending asylum applications, showing that

⁵ Legal centre Lesbos plus personal witness experience.

European border officials do not operate according to the to the Asylum procedure directive⁶ (2013) of the European union.

Consequence of this is that no one really seems to know exactly when people are put in prison, but generally it is people who are: not registered as asylum-seeker(yet), are from countries that have a low low rate of recognition(a list of 28 nationalities including Morocco, Bangladesh, Algeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Cameroon) and people who have been rejected after their first asylum interview and are put there prior to their deportation. The following three stories about imprisonment give a image of the arbitrary character of detention on Lesvos.

A. arrived on Lesvos in April 2016. He has been waiting for almost a year in Moria to have his case examined. When they finally do so his asylum is rejected. They pick him up on the street and bring him to prison in Moria. There he is held for 2 months and then transferred to the police station where again he is held for one month. Then he is deported to Turkey. He will spend 6 months in prison there.

C fled his home country Iran together with his brother D in fear of persecution. C and D are human right activist. They both applied for asylum in Greece. C's asylum claim was approved, while his brothers (identical) claim was rejected. After this rejection police arrested him and tried to deport him without notice. D was not able to appeal his rejection. Lawyers managed to get D off the deportation boat last minute but D has been imprisoned in Moria prison since. After a 40 day(!) hunger strike in prison and his brother outside of prison, he was released from detention. He is now awaiting his appeal.

B also arrived in April after being released from a detention center in Turkey where they held him for several months. After a year of waiting on Lesvos he is arrested inside the camp when he tries to renew his papers. He is brought to the prison in Moria. There they force him to apply for asylum. After a few days he has his interview. Because independent

⁶ Asylum procedure directive of the European union. "The Asylum Procedures Directive sets common procedures for EU Member States for granting and withdrawing international protection" (European commission, 2013) . Article 46(6)(b) an asylum applicant who falls into the inadmissibility categories found in Article 36(2)(a), (b), or (d) is not granted the right to remain in a territory until the "time limit within which to exercise their right to an effective remedy has expired and when such a right has been exercised within the time limit,pending the outcome of the remedy."

lawyers have no access to the camp he has no preparation for the interview and his case is rejected. He is tired of Lesvos and wants to get out of prison so he signs up for voluntary deportation. The process takes weeks to many months in Lesvos. Finally he is transferred to Athens into a detention center. He is imprisoned for 2 months before he is deported.

5.5.3 Deportation

The deportation procedure is set up in a way, that after a first asylum rejection the asylum-seeker is left with 2 options. Option 1: she signs a voluntary deportation form⁷ from the International organisation for migration(IOM) that will make sure the applicant is 'voluntary' deported back to her home country. In this case, the IOM pays a 1000,00 Euros ("*reintegration cash assistance*") (IOM, 2017) plus the plane ticket to the assigned home country. Option 2:, the asylum seeker appeals the negative asylum decision in court. By doing so, the applicant loses the right to be deported 'voluntary' by the IOM in case of a second rejection. If their claim is then rejected in appeal as well (which is quite likely given the fact that applicant have very little access to legal assistance) the applicant is deported to Turkey, where he or she will end up in prison for an undetermined amount of time without access to legal assistance and often without any access to people outside the detention facility. (Global Detention Project, 2016; Ulusoy & Battjes, 2017). F. A 24 year old man from Pakistan, explained to me why he signed for voluntary deportation: *"I signed for voluntary deportation to Pakistan.. cause I know they never accept me here and then they send me back to Turkey.. in jail in prison.. and again long time in jail and struggle and then go back to Pakistan.. and now I go back to Pakistan.. it's better for me. Cause i don't want prison first in Lesvos.. and second in Turkey and then after go back to Pakistan.. i don't want."* (F)

The legal centre Lesvos (an organisation consisting of juridical expert working as volunteers to provide legal aid to migrants on Lesvos) explained how, before deportation, migrants are stripped of all their possessions like phones and money. When they arrive in Turkey in the detention facilities, they have no options to get in touch with the outside world. If there already would be a payphone, they do not have contacts nor money to use it. A., A older man from Pakistan explains what it means to be deported to Turkey: *"A lot of guys go back to their countries with voluntary deportation with IOM. And a lot of people are being deported to Turkey.*

⁷ Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme (AVRR)

Yesterday I was talking with one friend, he has deportation last year on 4th of april. After 1 year and 1 month, he is released and free now in Turkey. After 1 year and 1 month! they don't allow there a cellphone and also this guy don't have money. So when someone goes back to Pakistan from that prison, then this guy gave him the number of his brother and mother and father. They say: when you go to Pakistan, please, one minute you call my family and say that I'm living here, i'm not dead. when i will come out of this jail I will call you, but one day I'll come. (A.)

On the website of the OIM we can read the following statement about the AVRR programme: *"The decision of returning back home is 100% voluntary and based on migrant's request. A voluntary decision encompasses two elements, freedom of choice and an informed decision which requires the availability of enough accurate and objective information upon which to base the decision."*(IOM, 2017) However, the voluntary nature of this program is controversial the least, cause the effect of the program is that people are discouraged to appeal their negative asylum decision, meaning that it 'forces' people into a so called 'voluntary' deportation. Essentially, -under the banner of freedom of choice-, the IOM is paying people not to appeal their negative asylum decision, while at the same time threatening with a likely imprisonment in Turkey for those who *do* appeal.

The deportation apparatus is a fundamental cog in the machine of sovereignty as deportation is the execution of the *sovereign cut*. That divide made by the sovereign between the wanted and the unwanted, between those who belong and those who don't. It is a very explicit and violent act of exclusion from society and nation. An act that constantly reaffirms the nation's sovereignty and its borders.

6. 'Social hygiene' in the city

It was a hot day like there are so many on Lesbos, and with some friends we decide to go for a swim in the sea next to the nearby city beach. Apart from a handful of local youngsters we are the only ones there enjoying the cool water. Two of my friends (who are on Lesbos as migrants) are sitting on a rock several meters further while suddenly two pickup trucks drive up on the road towards them. Four Greek police officers step out of the car, they belong to a local drugs police unit. Dressed in full armour, sunglasses, and with guns on their hips, they walk towards my friends sitting on the rock and ask them for their papers. Me and the rest of our group come out of the water and join our friends. We are not asked for our papers. My two friends give them their papers, knowing they don't have much to worry because they have the right documents to be on Lesbos. After they checked their papers they are asked to step into the car, because they will be brought to the police station so their bodies can be searched for drugs. While I am standing there not knowing what to do, my two friends step in the car and are taken to the police station. While I was feeling enraged and powerless, My friends didn't really show much signs of anger or fear; "don't worry" they say indifferent, "we will be back in 2 hours". When I call them after 2 hours they tell me they are already on their way back to the beach, walking from the police station at the other side of the city.

The scene above describes the first time I witnessed the greek police arresting migrants on the street in Mytilini. Many, many more of these cases were to follow. A special drugs unit of the Mytilini police is systematically checking migrants on the streets in or near Mytilini for their documents and for drugs. These checks are used to discover migrants who might try to stay on the island 'irregularly' while their asylum claim is rejected, or to find migrants who have not yet registered and filed an asylum claim at Moria. K., a refugee from Iraq explains: "If someone has a rejection and they are here still, and they maybe try to go to athens illegally, the police will then arrest them and move them to prison in Moria, in section B." However, the amount of migrants without the right documents to be on Lesbos is imperceptible and the few that are there won't really dare to walk freely on the streets of Mytilini. Even when migrants can show the police the right documents, the police will arrest them and take them to the police station under the banner of a drug search. Every single respondent I talked to mentioned this happening to him several times. Erfan

explains what this looks like: *"We can do anything, but the police arrests us everyday, just when we are walking to Mytilini and police come to us and arrested us without no reason. Most of the time they are special forces, the drugs police, they are looking for drugs. They take our ausweis, they are transferring us to the police station. They make us completely naked. completely naked you know..and they just investigate us, look for drugs and these things, and after 1 hour or 2 hour without no reason they keep us in the police station and released again. for example this week I was arrested on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. 3 days in a row!, can you imagine.. I was arrested by the police men."* (Erfan).

Although these arbitrary arrests are a clear violation of human rights⁸, These police checks have been quite normalized in Mytilini, they happen on the beach, on the busy central square of Mytilini, on terraces of cafés. Although, according to respondents they happen most often hidden away from the eyes of the tourist and the local population, on the long big road that connects Mytilini with camp Moria. Local authorities want people in Moria, not in the city: *"They say: why you live outside Moria? Moria is for you. Is for refugees, is a refugee camp. Why you go outside and live outside, you should live inside. (F).* Even just outside of Moria camp, migrants are not allowed to go for walks or hangout in the olive groves: *"Also when you go outside of Moria, upstairs in the mountain, when police is coming there they say why you sit here, go inside! its also not allowed to sit there"(A.).* To demonstrate the magnitude of the repressive situation for migrants on the island, i'm presenting a few more testimonies I have gathered concerning this repression.

"And when i go into town, some police car is coming and they say show me you paper and they say you must come with me in police station cause i want to check your paper. why you check my paper!? its also you who gave me this paper.. you give me this, it has 1 or 2 months time. when paper is expired okay you arrest me and bring me there in Moria prison because i made a mistake cause i didn't not go to renew it. but when i'm going into town and one car arrest me and bring me into police station, after 1 hour i'm sitting there and they check me same as criminal". (A.)

⁸ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 9. Ban on arbitrary detention. 1. Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.(United nations, 1948, article 9.)

Sometimes on the way back to Moria it happened. I know some people who started walking at 11 o'clock to Moria, and when he arrived near Kara tepe(halfway), the police arrested him, they bring him to police station, and check his papers and check his body for anything. Then they say go back to Moria. He started walking again, and then the police, some other police arrest him near some village on the way to Moria, again he was taken to the police station, and they ask him about his procedure decision and everything, there was no problem so they said go back to Moria. When he arrived near Moria, like one Kilometer, the police again arrested him... in one night 3 times. and this happened with 2 of my friends, they started walking at 11 o'clock but arrived at 4 o'clock in the morning.(K.)

"Everyday police arrest me... everyday! Because i'm arrested many times, I was in police station and every police there know me. One of them asked me,; what do you want? and is ask him,; but what do you want!? Everyday you arrest me..(H.)

" Sometime they say open your clothes. only have your underwear and then they check you. I'm not a terrorist. I'm a refugee. And then after 1 hour they say okay, you go! Sometimes police bring you there in police station, then you go back, and one other car is coming and arrest you and bring you again to police station. It's a long way to go back and walk". (A.)

"Because they want to put refugees out of the city, but I don't know what's wrong, cause I pay for everything, I buy everything I ... like every normal person. I didn't do anything bad, or anything illegally here. I only walked around the city and sit in some café and eat something, buy something and then I come back to Moria. like all the normal people from Greece. but I don't know why they don't like us. We didn't do anything bad here".(K.)

To be clear, all migrants in Moria have the full legal rights - also in the exceptional legal situation on Lesbos - to be in the city of Mytilini, walk on the roads, go shopping or hang out in cafés or wherever they want to. Still, the police is arresting them everyday. I have witnessed some of these arrest and was aghast and upset by the performance of this apartheid regime. What struck me maybe even more, was how those being arrested dealt with the situation. Seemingly "numb" and cooperative, undergoing their arrest as if this was a normal everyday thing, that they could not do anything about. The distressing thing of course is that these are actually everyday 'normal' events, and that any form of resistance at that moment

would probably only cause more problems. This, of course, does not mean it does not affect them: *"When the police arrested me, I feel like this is again a country that i'm not free in, again i don't have freedom here. I'm losing my hope every time that they arrested, I grow very hopeless, I get very tired and tired, more tired than before. and most of the time, it comes to my mind that i should deport myself voluntary and come back again to the war in Afghanistan. It really feels bad".(E.)*

Although many have, somehow, accepted this repression and will try to go into town either way, for others it does have severe consequences: *"all people are afraid about this when they are going to town, they say okay now i'm not going in town. Because people don't have lot of money, they go and walk. it's 8 to 10 kilometer from Moria to Mytilini, all people go walk. and after all people are afraid about this, when I come back, when I'm near to Moria, police arrest me again and again bring me to police station. it's very strain to come back again.. that's why many people are not going into town. Because of this. Its..it feels crazy. It's not good because it's making people crazy and everything. It's why people don't come into town or outside Moria. All people are living inside and don't come out. (A.)* The strategy of the local authorities is working, in a way that people will think twice before coming to town, afraid of being arrested. Together with all the other dehumanizing and demoralizing experiences migrants have on Lesbos, this repression leads to an outcome the authorities are aiming for: people are growing tired and hopeless, of the uncertainty, the arrests, the waiting, the horrible conditions and end up signing up for a 'voluntary' deportation with the IOM. *"They want to annoy us. they want to just make us tired, so we will deport ourselves voluntary (E.).* Others, perhaps even more hopeless, take other, more drastic actions: *Because i'm human.. I don't like this situation and I don't like Lesbos. Cause I see everything here.. and many people make suicide. Because they have too many problem in Pakistan.. and they also have many problem here.. so he wants to die. He doesn't like live anymore. Then he rather dies.*

7. Resistance and contesting the border of the camp

“Only the circus master and his animal tamers believed in the absolute magic of terror and the mesmerizing effects of false rewards”

(Manea, On Clowns: The Dictator and The Artist, 1992).

In the following chapter I shift focus from the totalitarian perspective of Agamben, towards a focus on possibility and the expression of human agency in and outside the space of the camp. Through empirical observations and the stories of inhabitants I have presented a grim image of Camp Moria, and while this image is real, it is not *all* there is. The ‘totalitarian’ theory of the production of bare life and the performance of that theory in the camp, show small cracks that show a margin of freedom, in the real, lived space of the camp. The camp is not only that place of the performance of sovereign control and oppression, it is also a space of conflict, information, resistance, and political organisation. A space inhabited by people refusing to be made into bare life beings. These cracks, do not always present themselves in way that some would recognize as grant and purely political action, rather they happen in micro-action, in day to day conduct that inhabitants of the camp creatively developed in order to defy that sovereign control.

Inhabitants of the camp continuously contest the camp its borders. There is a hole under one of the fences in the back of the camp, and inhabitants who live around that area in the camp sometimes use the hole as their entrance. It seems unlikely that the camp’s guards do not know about this, as there’s even a permanent small pad to protect your back while crawling through that hole. Inhabitants sometime invite people from outside the camp to secretly join them inside, having some food or just to hang out together in the tent. It’s quite possible to not be noticed by guards when moving through the maze of tents and tent like structures. These invitations are somehow excited for everyone, for it is of course quite literally a contestation of the camps border, but more, it is contesting what that border is trying to produce. These moments, that would most often involve some food or making music on instruments(like makeshift flutes), are resisting segregation and division, abandonment and subjectification, because it is the performance of cross border community. These small moments of community,

resist that dehumanizing regime of the camp. These moment do of course not only happen when people from 'the outside' join, but happen all the time when people come together. Community is also the banner under which residents of the camp organize themselves. Different national communities in camp Moria all have informal 'community leaders', People who somehow naturally emerged as spokespersons and conflict resolvers of a certain community. I've met some of these community leaders, and they all appeared to be charismatic and somewhat 'wise' and restrained people. And not unimportant: fluent in english. These community leaders would act as problem solvers or mediators within the community and between communities. As well as that they would be the spokesperson when in contact with the camps authorities. Members of the community would ask them to help with questions about their procedures or with translations. *"I like to do something for people from my country, for Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian guys. Because.. lot of Pakistani and Indian and Bangladeshi guys don't speak English, but in these countries we speak the same language so I always try to help these people from these countries. I help by translating, and going with them who don't know what documents they need for what, for example the hospital"*(A.) These community leaders often also play a big role in organizing protest in the camp, for example demonstrations against bureaucratic discrimination. E. explained to me how they often protested against the asylum procedures that started very long after arrival for people from Afghanistan: *"At first, after they construct that branch(asylum office in Moria), they just interview the Syrian people for 2 months, and my own language is Farsi you know like Iranian guys, so the Afghan people and the Iranian had a lot of demonstration and a protest, we tried to tell them that they had to interview us also. And after 2 months we forced them, and they started our interviews you know. And it was on januari that I was full registered here, I got my paper (license to stay on the island). You know my first registration was after 7 months...(E)"* E. his claim that they forced them to start interviews with everyone, shows an attitude that the inhabitant actually feel empowered by these demonstrations and feel like they play a part in changing how the asylum procedures function, showing that even within the camp migrants retained some kind of political agency.

More recently however, demonstrations in the camp are met with more repressive police force. In the two months I spend on Lesvos, twice did riots break out after a peaceful demonstration in the camp. Teargas would be shot and stones

would be thrown. During the riots parts of the asylum office containers and the Euro Relief office were burned down. Out of anger and frustration, some migrants attack the institutes that exist to 'manage' migrants on Lesbos and their flow in and out of Europe. These acts of arson are not very well understood by the media, locals or other spectators. People blame those migrants for attacking the institutes that help them, saying that instead of being angry they should be grateful. But we can also understand these acts of violence as self defence against those institutions that try to deprive them of their human existence, as actions against those powers that are turning migrants into deportable and detainable subjects.

7.1 Outside the camp's borders

There are hundreds of migrants who try to escape camp Moria. Sick of the violence, the waiting and the degrading conditions people search for other possibilities and places to stay. During the day there's a couple volunteer run social spaces on the island, organized by small NGOs, where some inhabitant (those who still have the energy and the freedom of mind, to move themselves out of the camp) of Moria camp come to hangout, have tea, eat food and rest. I've experienced these spaces as pleasant, and can imagine it offers a environment in which people can release just a little bit of that tension. These places offer classes, from yoga to german, that migrants can attend for free. Although I believe these places do good work for the most part, they can only cater for a extremely small part of the migrant population on Lesbos. Besides, they a hard to reach for inhabitants of Moria and the walk back to Moria after closing time comes with the risk of being arrested by the police. These spaces close in the evening and are not places to sleep, after spending the day there migrant will have to return back to the confines of Moria.

Some hundreds of migrants do not go back to Moria anymore and decide that they rather sleep rough on the beaches, streets and the parks of Mytilini - even with the constant fear of arrest- . During my time on Lesbos fewer and fewer people were visible on the streets however, and only those with good hiding places managed not to be arrested. H. tells me: *"Too much people live in Moria. Then we go to other place. But police make problem for every people living outside Moria. (...)You cannot live in the city cause police arrest you and bring you to the camp again. Cause they say we have many tourist here and you have to stay at the camp."* (H.). In this 'clean' and quiet tourist

town, with its cocktail bars and luxury yachts, there is no place for the disrupting element of the refugee. So when the tourist season approached, the police repression on people sleeping outside Moria increased heavily, and special police units patrolling in jeeps would hunt for migrants in the parks and beaches. This often resulted in dreadful 'cat and mouse games', where the stakes would be violence, detention and deportation.

7.1.1 *Spaces of autonomy/Squats*

In the search of safer spaces, some migrants find empty, unused buildings in the Mytilini and Moria area where they secretly sleep and live. These buildings, out of sight of the police or suspicious neighbours, are often more like ruins; partly collapsed, or unfinished, without electricity, water or sanitary facilities. Sometimes the police finds and evicts these buildings, arresting people inside. Occasionally new buildings are discovered and inhabited by migrants. B, who lived in Moria for half a year explained to me, with a rather phlegmatic air, how he went about finding a space: *It's not a very big island you know.. when you are looking for something you need... you will find it. When you have to do something you will find a way to do it. When I left Moria I was looking for a place, and I found it. (B)*

It's hard to exactly know the scale on which this is happening, for of course, most migrants will try to be as discreet as they possibly can. During my stay on Lesbos there were several I knew of, and I'm sure I did not know of all. Two of these buildings had a slightly different character than the rest of them. First of all, their existence was no secret for the authorities or the locals. Second; they were bigger and housed a lot more people than most of those other places. One of them was called; 'the old squat' by its residents. I talk in past tense since the building was evicted during my stay on the island and is no longer inhabited. It was called *the old squat* because later, another big building was squatted, which was then called '*the new squat*', simple. However, the old squat was also a terribly old building; an big abandoned ruin with a big courtyard. Located on the outskirts of the city, right in the black and green fumes of the old, oil-fired power plant of Lesbos.

Some time before the occupation, a mobile kitchen had set up shop on the beach/parking in front of that building. A mix of activist, independent volunteers and migrants had made a little encampment and cooked and distributed food

there. When the local authorities told them to leave, they decided to move into the abandoned building on the other side of the road. E. was already there around that time, and explained to me how they went about:

"Exactly in front of the beach that they had their camping, there was the old building that is owned by the alpha back on Lesbos island and we moved there and it was like a wreckage. I was with many of my friends like 5 persons, and we moved there we tried to fix that building, just try to make it like a house. So we started our life there" (E.).

Collectively, a group of migrants decided to move into the building, supported by people from the mobile kitchen. *Starting a life* there, must have taken quite some effort from the people moving in, for it was really not a pleasant place; It was dirty and without facilities, with the noise and the foul smell from the neighboring powerplant penetrating your brain. *"It was a ruin! it was a complete wreckage, a destroyed building. but we were happy inside that building. It was important for us (...) It was so much better than the Moria camp because after we moved there, we had some kind of separated rooms for ourselves, we cooked by ourselves, the volunteers from Noborderkitchen provided us with food boxes, just including potatoes, some veggies, rice, everything, and with this food we cooked our food ourself there. And also some volunteers sleep with us there" (E.).* The migrants from Moria and some volunteers and activist soon made the building into a more liveable space. More and more people heard of the existence of the building and started living there. One of them was K. who was only on the island for about a month, staying in Moria, till he heard of the 'old squat': *"I only live in old squat one month, but if I knew the old squat before, and how good it is, I would have moved there much more soon. After 25 days, I feel in Moria, I feel dead everyday, I don't know what I am doing in Moria, it's a very fucking life. But in old squat I felt like I started a life again."* K. is not the only one speaking about the old squat in this way, also E. uses big words and describes intense emotions of freedom when talking about the old squat: *" I just felt free in that old squat. When I entered that old squat I felt there is humanity, my mind completely changed."* (E.) So what happened in this old building that could have such a big impact on the people living there ? In the next subchapters I try to offer a view into that space of the old squat.

7.1.2 Construction and performance of community

"50 people moved to the old squat. Including many nations; Iranian, Pakistan, Afghans, Kurdisch guys, they moved there. and the volunteers, every week they brought like a musician group. they came there and they play some live music. They tried to make some entertainment, every night we had some kind of party. All the volunteer gather together, we buy some stuff to eat and we all sat together and talk to each other till midnight and we played football. Because it had a big yard. In that old building we played football. we had 2 teams, we played volleyball, hide and seek, haha. And every night we had a party with dancing there haha, yes it was very nice for me you know"(E.)

In that old abandoned building something quite special was happening. In the midst of all the great misery on the island, it was in this old ruin, that people found back some humanity and freedom.

When entered *the old squat* (Fig.14 & 15) for the first time I was surprised about the amount of people hanging out. In the courtyard people were playing cricket, others were hanging out on the stairs or makeshift benches. Still, It was not really what I expected a social space to be. This was still a pretty rough place, an old building in a terrible condition with a lot of trash laying around. Soon, I got to know more and more residents of the squat and I was invited in their rooms occasionally to hangout or have food. The rooms stood in great contrast with the rest of the building. Great effort was put in making the rooms clean, warm and cosy. It was clear that all (financial) resources that were there, were put into creating a nice environment inside the rooms. Afterwards I learned that the place had functioned and presented itself as a 'social center' a bit more before, but was then evicted by the police who destroyed most of the constructed facilities by the residents. After, the place was re-squatted again and the residents had now mainly focussed on their own private spaces. Afraid that any effort put in making the outside area 'look nice' would be in vain again, in case of another eviction.



Fig.14: The old squat next to the Lesvos Powerplant. (Photograph by author, May 2017)



Fig. 15: Out and inside of the 'old squat'. (Photos by author and L. Heinig. May 2017)

Different groups of friends shared rooms, sometimes dividing themselves by nationality or language, and sometimes not. Most, but not all 'European' volunteers shared rooms together too, but this would also mix at times. Between fifty and a hundred people were living in the squat, some of them permanently and some of them just for a while or a couple of days a week. The residents of the squat were a mixed crowd. Afghans, Iranians, Iraqis, Pakistanis, Bangladeshi, Kurds, Syrians, Germans, Brits, Austrians, Swedes and more, all lived together in this building. Most of the residents living there who came to Lesbos as migrants, were male.

Although people were also clustering by nationality in this old squat, there seemed to be hardly any tensions between national groups. The space breathed a strong air of togetherness. The violence and tension, so strongly present in camp Moria, did not penetrate this space. E. explained why he thinks that is:

"No, there were no fights, it was the main reason that I moved and stayed in that building. We were from all the nations but we didn't have any fight. Because all of us were more relaxed, Because we cooked for ourselves and we were kind of happy, because of things like parties.. chit chat with the volunteers, and because we were kind of out of depression we were patient, and because of this we did not have any fight. All of us were very friendly." (E.) All the respondent interviewed who had lived in the old squat spoke of some sort of liberation of the mind when they moved out of Moria into the squat. Moria had made them depressed, and unable to think clearly. K: *"When I was in Moria before, I saw so many people attacking themselves, wounding themselves. Maybe to get the paper to go to Athens, or for getting asylum here. But really, when I was there in Moria, sometimes I think when I do this, it's good. But when I left I thought back about that time, woww my mind!.. My thinking was very bad!.. But in here...[in the squat] I'm feeling good, because my mind is relaxed, you know. But when I come back to Moria, my mind is very complicated."* (K). The squat was a place that gave its residents some air to breathe, providing a space for rest, privacy and self determination. Ko. : *"It was better than Moria, because the most important thing is that it is not very crowded there and there is no fight and you can cook for yourself anything you want, how you want to cook it. Everything really good. Because in the old squat there is rooms. We arrange a room, we put a blanket and everything."* These seemingly small actions of self determination became mayor when living in a dimension in which everything is decided for you. The cooking, again and again comes back as such an important aspect of what made life in the squat so much better than life in Moria. By cooking for oneself they could decide

what to eat, where and when they wanted it. Of course, in a different context, cooking for oneself could mean a whole different thing. But in this context, it meant that people could finally *take care of themselves* and not *be taken care of*. By cooking, residents were gaining back some of the qualities of humanity. Almost always, the cooking was done collectively by a certain group of friends or a mix of groups. Staying in the squat I was invited to eat with people pretty much all of the time. Gathering on old UNHCR blankets inside the cosy rooms we would get together and share *chapati* bread, potato stews or steaming plates of lentil curry. Residents with different national backgrounds would mix, as friends. Nothing like the hostility in camp Moria. The more often I was in the squat, the less I noticed the dirt laying around or the smell of the powerplant. A strong community was being established inside this building. An international community, that for some long term residents felt like family: “ *I feel like it was very comfortable and one family. One family I feel there. lot of nice and good friends, nice people is living there. Because, I don’t feel I’m out of my country and out of my family, I feel like I’m in my family and I’m home.*” (At.) The diners would sometimes turn into parties, where simple instruments were brought in, and we would dance and sing together. Mixing Kurdish dances with Pakistani singing, Dutch awkwardness and Iranian hospitality, indeed, *these moments were performances of (cross border) community. “We are all in the same situation, (...) and when we came here, we are very good united together because it’s so much better than Moria”*(A). I started realizing more and more that these moments - in the face of of a border regime of management, exclusion, division and encampment - were a lot more than what they might appear to be. These moments of building and performing community were true acts of resistance against the great powers that tried to create a bare and divided existence.

On this island of Lesvos the performance of community and the building of (international) horizontal relationships became an absolutely political act, and by creating this (sense of) community and place, the residents of the old squat managed to gain back something that could be called humanity. The creation of community of course also means creating a foundation from where a political life can be lived and re-appropriated. For what can politics even mean without community or social relationships?

7.1.3 Egalitarian support and the struggle for not-reproducing.

“Because I feel happy when I’m next to them and i’m very thankful for each of them its very important they are here. Even if they don’t help me, just their presence is very important for me because when they are here and I feel their presence it just gives me hope. I can feel the humanity. I can feel that I am still a human and not an animal”(E)

The community of the old squat consisted of both people who came to Lesvos as migrants, as of a fluctuating amount of people (most of them with European passports) who came there to support and show active solidarity. I will call these people volunteers, for that was the name used to address them(including me) inside the (community of) old squat. Mainly for the sake of convenience, this term was adopted by everyone living inside the squat. However, for many of the volunteers, this term seemed to be somewhat problematic. Most volunteers would, if they had to label themselves, rather call themselves something along the lines of (no border)activist, ‘solidarian’ or perhaps just ‘friends’. It’s a small example that quite clearly demonstrates the conflict that occurs amongst people who aim support in different, more egalitarian ways: How to not reproduce the same social relationships that you oppose?

“ They never say you are animal, and they never say, you are from another country, they say: all is one. They say, you are the same like me. Everyone is same, there is no difference”(F)

The old squat was a place where its resident lived and organized together, most volunteers active there, also lived there. For the migrants living in the squat, this was a very important aspect of what made these volunteers so different from others like for example the ones in Moria. (Fr.): *They are different! because when.. we are talking we are just talking and there is no negative or proud energy, like you have a passport and I don’t. and there is no :‘you are white and i’m black’. there is no: ‘where are you from’? it’s just who are you and who am I, and we we care about each other. A lot of love. I really found love in ‘no border’.*

E. explained to me how he felt humanity through the fact that they were all sleeping together in the same building: *“In that old squat where I saw all the volunteers...*

it was very interesting for me how a person can just quit there comfortably life in a comfortable country from a good life, coming here, and live like us, sleep in the wreckage, destroyed building like us. It was very important for me, because of that I felt humanity. There are some people that love us, that like us. "(E.). Again the topic of humanity comes up in the conversations with my respondents. The seemingly simply act of treating each others as equals made a big difference in how efforts of support are received. *"They never say.. you live in this tent and I go home. And I live in home.. no they live together.. if I live in tent.. they also live in tent. I like these persons. Cause in Moria these people say: you live in tent.. and I live in home. Cause i'm human and he is animal.. but these people here [in old squat] help with the food and everything... but also say if I live in tent we also live in tent.. they say you are human and I am also human.. they don't say you are animal and I am human..yes.. so I like these people"(F).* Although the simple act of living together already formed an important part of the support work that happened in and around the squat, this was not the only thing that happened. Because the residents of the squat now lived outside of Moria, they also did not receive food there. For a lot of migrants with little financial resources this was a dilemma, for they did not want (or could not) to be in Moria, but they needed to survive.

The volunteers gathered resources and organized a system that made and distributed hundreds of food boxes amongst the residents of the different squats, and others that had found a possibility to live outside of camp Moria, every week. A 'foodbox' is basically a crate filled with basic food supplies such as: flour, rice, potatoes, fresh vegetables and spices. Food was bought locally or donated by local food markets. Different groups living together would weekly receive a box with food that they could cook themselves. Gas and cookers were also provided. The idea of food boxes sprung from the thought that people should be able to decide whatever they want to eat themselves. The food boxes were very well received and people really valued the fact that they could cook for themselves. Assembling and distributing the food boxes would most of the time happen by a mixed group of both volunteers and migrants, making it an act of self organisation. The day to day life in the squats would equally be organized by all of the residents themselves, as A. explains: *"All people is working together in one family. When you make food, it is together. When you make coffee, tea, or when you are cleaning, you do it together. Not*

someone is saying you do this, this this. No. If someone see that they have to do this, then this guy do this. No have boss. Just one team, one family doing it together".

The aim of anti-hierarchical self organisation and mutual aid was not only a dream brought to this squat in Lesvos by some European volunteers. These were ideas that were collectively supported and performed by all its residents. Not necessarily always supported by some grant political theory or meaning, but just because it showed to be a natural and *human* way of relating and organizing. *It's not like : you are different, you are big, you are small, you are high. They say if you want something, you get something.. and if they want something.. they get something. If they need your help, they say I need your help"(A.)* . Others, who were less acquainted with this kind of organisation (both volunteers and migrants) were inspired and motivated to become part of it too. However, I do not mean to idealize or utopianize these relations and the culture that developed around that space of the old squat. Everything created in such a 'crisis' like on Lesvos, of course is horribly constrained. Despite all the efforts of all the residents, of course difficulties and conflicts arose. The first and probably most crucial obstacle was the great difference in privilege between the migrants and the volunteers. Enormous privileges like having a passport and being able to buy a plane ticket and leave the island whenever they want to, the privilege of never never having fled home. The privilege of being able to move freely over the island of Lesvos themselves, without getting weird looks or being arrested by the police. The privilege of not having to fear for deportation to a prison in Turkey. The privilege of not having to cope with (post-)traumatic stress disorder, The privilege of being able to drive a car on the island or to be able to fluently speak english. The privilege of having access to financial resources(either from themselves or support networks throughout Europe). And often although not always: the privilege of being white. Needless to say, these privileges would create an unbalanced organisational structure, where in spite of great efforts of deciding and doing together, some core functions of the group would fall into the hands of the volunteers. Things like organizing the finances of the group, transporting and distributing food with cars, would painfully expose those imbalances.

The question of what *help* means, can mean or should mean stayed a central theme in organizing together. In so many ways the squat and its community tried to organize things like 'food' in different ways than in Moria. I am convinced that the efforts made a huge difference, but one can of course argue if the nature of help

is *truly* different. In the end, it is some European volunteers gathering resources (like food) to *give* to the migrants, Still creating a relationship of dependency, of the one that *gives* help and the one that *receives* the help. I do not necessarily mean that as a critique as to how things were organized in the community around the old squat. It was a topic that was constantly critically reflected on and contested by both volunteers as migrants. The squat and the support structure might never really fully achieve total horizontality but it was the constant struggle towards this that defined it and shaped it as *a movement*.

7.2 A Political existence ?

“ For me.. life.. is struggle. Life is like a cage.. and inside I’m fighting with life.. if I don’t fight.. life will beat me up, so I have to defend myself. Life is often stronger than me.. with big muscles, but we have to deal with it anyway.”(Fr.)

That Agamben’s conception of the life of a migrant - a life stripped of all that is political - is a ‘one-sided’ perspective, is repeatedly demonstrated by all the acts of political protest and demonstration on Lesvos. Migrants regularly organize themselves to gather on the streets of Mytilene. Since the Eu-Turkey deal, the main demands of the protesters has always been being able to leave the island. Also the condition migrants on Lesvos are being forced to live in are criticized, questioned and protested in demonstrations. During my stay on the island I witnessed a blockade of the ferry port of Lesvos in Mytilini. Hundreds of migrants gathered in front of the gates of the port and blocked it, letting no one in or out (fig 14.). The flyer that was distributed that day by the protesters read the following statement:

“We have spoken, we have shouted, we have pleaded!”

Still we face imprisonment, deportation and inhumane treatment and an uncertain future. Months of waiting and suffering and still we wait for answers. We have come together to claim our rights!
The time is now for the world to see our struggle and to act. We cannot wait for more corrupt political decisions to decide our fate. We who have suffered in these conditions have united for freedom.
How much longer can we wait? Why are we kept prisoners on this island? Why are our voices being silenced? Why are we being traded between Turkey and the

Eu like slaves or cattle? Unity and numbers give us power! Our freedom has been taken, united we will take it back!

We are peacefully demonstrating today at the port of Mytilini because Eu policies have kept us prisoners on the island of Lesbos. Although we are in Greece, a false border between the mainland and the island has been erected and we have been trapped on the island for months. We are not free to come and go from Lesbos to Athens through this port, which is Lesbos's main contact point with Greece and the rest of Europe. We have fled wars and persecution, and yet we are being treated like criminals.

We have made recommendations to the EU and the European commission, but our letters remain unanswered, and our invitation for European leaders to visit us in Lesbos has been ignored. We are nonviolently resisting today so that the world can no longer ignore the situation in which we are being forced to live.

We thank the Greek people who are standing beside us today and in solidarity have supported our right to freedom and to live in dignity in Europe."

(Flyer Distributed During Ferryport blockade april 26th, 2017)

The peaceful blockade continued till that evening, till the police threatened to violently intervene and arrest everyone protesting if they continued. The rumour was spread that arrest would have a negative impact on the migrants their asylum decision and people would be put into a fast track deportation procedure. Many I spoke to there that evening did not seem to care much about these threats, and did not want to leave the blockade. *'I have nothing to lose anyway'* is what they told me. Others seemed to be more worried about what implications being arrested might have and wanted to leave.

The leaders of the communities then came together and discussed the situation (together with a handful of active locals who supported the blockade) and decided they would stop the blockade. Some were frustrated about this decision, and some were relieved, But all left the port and walked back to Moria. The ferry to Athens was delayed several hours, and soon after the protesters left locals and tourist were already boarding the ferry again.



Fig 16: Protesters blocking the gates of the ferry port (Heinig, April 26, 2017)

Many demonstrations preceded and have followed after the port blockade. Most of the time demonstrations would involve walking from from Moria Camp to the central square of Mytilene; Sappho Square. E. from Afghanistan, explains what these demonstrations meant for him: *"We had many demonstration, and a kind of big demonstration. That we started from the Moria camp walking to Mytilini with a lot of banners yeah.. we had a lot of protest. (...) And by having this demonstrations, and by these activities I want to show that I want to go to another country you know, to achieve a better life. having a good life. (...) Every one of us refugees we were important part of those political activities and that demonstration because I could shout my freedom! I could tell my word to other people, maybe to all over the world. Cause I want to send my voice to every country: Just please. know what is happening here! This was my main reason. It was my goal, and all the volunteers and all the refugees here to show to all the world what is happening here, what is the real situation here. The things that they are announcing on the television are not true, about this island and Moria camp, the situation of the refugees. Here everything is completely different from what you are seeing on the television on the news, and by that*

demonstration I felt that it's my demonstration, It's my job.. I really wanted to send my voice so everybody knows what is my situation here"(E.) E. explains how he really felt that through these demonstrations he could reclaim ownership over his own message, his own voice.

Yes if we want we can change things. Im saying these things because.. these are rules, everything in this world is created by human, and it is changeable by humans. High border, war, policy.. everything is created by humans.. and everything is possible to change or remove or make better things. If we believe in ourselves we can bring some change, maybe not a lot. but at least a little bit.(F)

In the last month's (Autumn 2017) condition in Moria have only further deteriorated and migrants have been looking for other ways of getting their message out. On 20th of October a group of more the hundred migrants left Moria after another violent outbreak there. They decided they would go to and stay on the central square(Sappho square) in Mytilini. They slept on the square in the middle of the city for almost a month. The 'Sappho square protest' grew in numbers and name when it was joined by more men and women from Moria camp . The occupation of the square was met with intimidation by the police and the deputy mayor Katzanos, who personally walked up to the square in rage, destroying banners and tents of the protestors. After one month of occupation a 40 men big mob of local 'concerned citizens' and known neo-fascists tried to 'clear' the square. Together with the police they intimidated the protesters to such extent that they decided to leave the square. Three days later, in a continuation of this protest, another demonstration was organized by migrants, locals and others in solidarity with them. The demonstration ended in a occupation of the local office building of Syriza, the political party in power in Greece: *"Intending to pressure and hold accountable one of the responsible actors complicit in this treaty"*(Statement published on Athens indymedia on 27 november 2017), according to the statement of the migrants made after the occupation.

These kind of protests and demonstration are often very well documented by the residents of Moria and other protesters. Numbers of individuals film and write about the situation and the ongoing struggle on the island, mainly using social media like facebook or youtube as their media channels. In a conversation with F. -

a independent documentary filmmaker who came to Lesbos as a refugee-, he explained to me why- of course-, he is an activist: *"Each of us can be activist, each of us can change things. We can change anything in this world, anything, if we want and if we are united. (..) It's about the person you know. It doesn't mean that.. just because I'm a refugee I can not be an activist. Or I can not make a film. I just became refugee you know.. (..) when people encourage me, just because I'm a refugee. it just makes me feel like a refugee you know. I'm a person."* (F.) F. is documenting the situation on Lesbos since he arrived, trying to spread the word about what is going on on Lesbos through short documentaries. He is definitely not the only one actively involved in documenting and exposing the situation for migrants on the island. Another example: The two friends Basel and Murad living in Moria camp created a youtube channel called *twins4ever* on which they regularly post videos of their lives on Lesbos and in camp Moria. Videos that give great insight in what it means to be stuck on Lesbos as a refugee.

These moments and performances of political agency show that resistance in state of exception *is* possible. However, authorities do everything in their power to strip this political life from them, for protest are met with repression, police violence and detention. The final result or outcome of these protest might not be positive, for their demand will probably never be met. Nevertheless, these protesters show, every time they are on the streets- marching and shouting for justice- that their bodies are not fully made bare and that their desire for liberation and political struggle is strong and existing. Their protest is the affirmation and re-configuration of the relationship between life and politics. In some cruel ways, the desperate situation migrants are forced to live in on Lesbos, might even revitalize a certain kind of political existence. A existence that does not only refuse to abandon its politics but strengthens and intensifies it. While fighting for justice and freedom of movement, migrants organize themselves in and outside of their communities, creating new and unexpected networks and becoming the activist they might not ever planned to be when starting their journeys. Indeed, many migrants on Lesbos are very aware that their struggle on Lesbos is not only their own, but that it is part of a wider fight for global equality and right to free movement.

“oh yeah we can change ! we can change because what we think, what we want, we can do. Because we are human you know, we are born free, and we will die free.”(F.)

7.3 Autonomous movement

The island of Lesbos resembles a big prison for most migrants that are forced to live there, even if they manage to create a life outside the confines of Moria they are trapped on this island. However, like a prison, sometimes people manage to escape.

Everyone on Lesbos island came there autonomously, crossing multiple border and often enduring long and dangerous travels through war zones, over mountains and sea. All of the people on Lesbos had to deal with smugglers, coastguards and border patrol in order to get to the point where they are now. It seems almost silly to believe that once these people arrive on Lesbos, their knowledge, networks and skills of border-crossing suddenly simply disappears. And indeed it does not. Most people however, do come to Greece with the intention to apply for asylum, in the hope to travel to the mainland of Greece legally. Other people never really intended to apply for asylum in Greece, in fact they want to avoid applying for asylum in Greece because they know they probably don't get it. Even if they do, they don't want it because they were never looking for a future in Greece in the first place, because even as a legal migrant in Greece, life is extremely precarious.

“Well i think it's one great reason, very important for us. one great reason that people don't want to stay in Greece, because the situation the camps in very bad, the people is very bad with refugees. They don't want to make a community, make contact with the refugee, they don't let the refugee join the Greek culture, Greek country.. don't let.. so the refugee don't want to stay in Greece, so anytime after or before reject, the refugee try to move to some other country in an illegal way” (A.)

Most migrants on Lesbos are dreaming of a life somewhere else in Europe. Others will do everything within their power to avoid being registered, for they

know that they are 'undesirable aliens' according to the policy, and once authorities find out they are from so called undesired countries they will be put in detention immediately and kept there till their deportation to a Turkish prison after going through fast-track procedure. It is self evident that there are many reasons why people try to move away from Lesbos, 'irregularly'. These movements happen under the radar of the authorities, because of course they try to prevent it from happening. There are Three 'safe' ways of getting off the island; with the ferry to Athens or Kavala, flying from Mytilini airport or, with the small ferry back to Turkey. All of these options require travel documents that most migrants on Lesbos don't have. However, there is a market for everything. A. explained to me how he tried many times to pass the ferry and airport with illegal documents: *"It was my 8th time that I try to go to Athens illegally, I tried with a lot of documents. You know.. french ID's, Italian, England passport, ausweis, I tried with everything. By the ferry, and airport also, and all the time it was kind of bad luck and I was arrested by the policemen."* (A.) And while A. did not yet succeed after trying 8 times he labels that 'bad luck', making it sound like others do succeed. And indeed sometimes they do. During my stay I sometimes hear stories of people who somehow have been able to pass the tight security of the ferry or the airport and are now on the mainland of Greece. It is because of these stories (that are no fairy tales) that others keep on trying. This might sound harsh, but it might not come as a surprise that how darker one's skin the harder it is to trick and pass the security. We live in a world in which whiteness is associated with Europeanness so the ones who get through are often the ones who - appearance wise - can pass for white 'Europeans'.

It requires financial resources to buy tickets and illegal documents. Often people have spent all their money (or it was stolen from them) on their way to Lesbos and do not have these resources. These people, desperate to get away from the island sometimes chose for other ways. People have tried to move to the mainland of Greece over sea in dinghies, an extremely dangerous journey and not attempted often. Of course, there are no exact numbers nor do I aspire knowing exactly, but in conversation with people I have understood it is almost never done. Still, stories - almost like heroic escape tales - are told about people making it alive to the mainland of Greece.

Another perilous option is trying to get onto the ferry inside containers or in the trunks of cars. Although the security is tight it is likely people make it through occasionally. Despite of being dangerous and possible lethal, it is still attempted. In an emotional conversation with F. he explained to me how some of his friends died inside a container, in an attempt to get to Athens: *"Also 8 people die in container .. many people don't like it here. So they left in a container.. but they died in container. They stay in one iron container, inside. Someone closed the door and then after 10 hours they died. Police see this but they never gave the dead bodies back. I don't know where is the dead bodies.. I asked everyone. Many people asked and everyone asks. In my culture in Pakistan.. dead body should be given to family.. but police never gave the dead bodies. There is too many problems.. I don't want to die here cause then my dead body will never be given back to my family.. but if I die in Pakistan.. my family will take my dead body.. (F.)."*

There is another option for leaving the island on one's own terms and I must say it surprised me somehow when I first heard people talking about it: People are going back to Turkey the same way as they came. Moving 'irregularly' back to the Turkish coast on a dinghy or a small fisherman's boat. In the night, under the radar and out of sight of Frontex boats and Turkish coastguards people 'deport' themselves back to Turkey. Back to the very same beaches they departed from months or years ago, full of fear of the dangerous crossing, but full of hope for they could see the lights of Europe vaguely glinting in a distance. Although I was surprised at first, it started to make a lot of sense when I talked to people about it. People were sick and hopeless of the waiting and the horrible conditions on Lesbos and most people that decided to move back Turkey either had their asylum rejected or did not want to wait for a (certain) rejection followed by detention and deportation to a Turkish prison. The stories of friends disappearing into Turkish prisons were alarming them, of course. Consequently, rather than 'safely' being deported back to Turkey under the control of Greek and Turkish authorities, people choose to disappear from the radar and move back to Turkey on their own terms. Making the dangerous crossing again, hoping not to be detected by authorities. In a way, people claim back and make use of their irregularity, because they have experienced -and are aware-, that 'regular' migration will make sure they end up in prison. Instead of trying to make legal claims on asylum and becoming part of a managed flow of migrants back to Turkey, people choose not to be directed. Often this involves stripping themselves from their legal identities as well, throwing away

passport and burning away fingerprints to avoid being again registered as an alien from an undesired country. Without legal identity, one is exposed to sovereign violence, but simultaneously hard to grasp and exercise power over. It makes it particularly difficult to deport people to their country of origin, for that country is unknown. The Eu-Turkey deal however, is set up exactly to avoid these difficulties and makes it possible to deport *anyone* out of Europe back to Turkey. The Turkey deal only counts for Greece however so people will look for other option to enter Europe. People told me that if they succeeded to cross back to Turkey they would try different routes, possible going over the black sea to Romania or moving all the way to Libya to make the dangerous crossing to Italy there. Both options that, needless to say, involve an amazing risk and high chance of death.

Migrant choose their own trajectories. Creatively finding new routes and ways to pass security checks, climb fences and cross borders. Making use of networks, knowledge and skills, they seem to always be one step ahead of the border regime that tries to control them. It is important to emphasize these practises of autonomous mobility, moving away from approaching migrants as helpless victims. But while this is a part of the reality of migrant experiences we must not be blind for that other, forcefully constraining side of the border that shapes the reality of others, caught under the rule of sovereignty. Especially the function of Lesbos as a prison island, and the exceptional law under the EU-Turkey deal, makes autonomous movement challenging and above all very risky. Thousands of people are captured on Lesbos; Those with less resources and connections, or those unable or unwilling to take deathly risks; those who are caught by the coastguards, and Frontex, unable to escape detention and deportation; all those who die at sea. For all of them, the border management regime shows how it brutally attempts to control mobility, causing terrible suffering and death.

8. Conclusion

Emerging myself in the daily reality of migrants on Lesbos I have found answers to my research questions. In working and living alongside migrants and their support structures I have been given the opportunity to explore the different expressions of power that are manifested on the Island. through in-depth interviews, observation and participation I have gathered data which I presented in different themes along this thesis. Those themes reflect on - and give answers to- the different sub-questions that I formulated when starting this research. The main goals of this research was gaining a deeper understanding of the different modes of power active on the island, an understanding of both the exertion of biopolitical power, as the power of resistance. The following overarching research question was formulated to reach this research goal: *How is power exercised over migrant on Lesbos, and in what way are these powers resisted?* In the following paragraphs I answer my sub-questions to come to an overall conclusion that answers my main research question.

The contemporary European border regime and immigration policy at the Greek borders is shaped by Eu-Turkey deal. This deal lays the foundation of all power exercised over migrants on Lesbos. As a result of a discourse of emergency and protection of sovereignty of European nationstates a treaty was signed between the European union and Turkey stating that all migrants entering the Greek islands irregularly will be declared inadmissible and shall be deported back to Turkey. The deal is violating European and international human rights by deporting migrants back to an unsafe country, as Turkey proved itself to be. Turkey does not grant international protection to refugees outside of the European Union and migrants deported back to Turkey end up in detention centres. After an undetermined amount of time up to more than a year, migrants are then deported from Turkey to their 'home countries', including unsafe countries like Syria and Afghanistan. The legally indistinct character of the Eu-Turkey deal turns Lesbos in to an exceptional space, both legally & politically as geographically, where conventional rule of law (as formulated in the 1951 Geneva refugee convention and the Asylum procedure directive of the European union) is temporarily suspended.

These steps towards exceptionality resonate strongly with Agamben's theory of 'the space of exception'. In as much as that by denying basic human rights of migrants, the humanity of migrants is not recognized, and stripped from them. This creates a space and an indistinct juridical framework that allows the production of a *bare life* and exposure to sovereign violence. The site where this space is materialized, is the island of Lesbos in its entirety, and in its most extreme and totalitarian form; camp Moria.

The geographical characteristics of Lesbos are used strategically in 'defence' of the European border; both as a strong physical border as a moral alibi for the thousands that die as a result of a closed border policy. Additionally, the island is used as a giant containment facility for all migrant who made the crossing after the Eu-Turkey deal, halting their mobility and giving European security and asylum institutions the opportunity to perform their sovereign politics; register, medically check and gather biometric data of all border crosser. Greek authorities use their power to immediately imprison border crossers from countries with a low asylum recognition rate. Locked up in a special detention sector of camp Moria, they are put through an exceptional admissibility fast track procedure that violates international asylum law by systematically removing legal safeguards and protection. Deportation is the mechanism and the dividing practice through which the border policy of Greek state and European union is executed.

Additionally, European border policy is executed through politics of encampment.

As an instrument of *sovereign* power the camp is used to include and exclude, to abandon and at the same time capture and concentrate border crossers. The majority of migrants, are not put in detention on arrival but are put in a semi-open facility; camp Moria, where they are to wait for their asylum decision for months or years. This fully razor wired camp is located in the hinterlands of Mytilene, the capital of Lesbos. The distance of the camp in relation to the city, makes that residents of the camp are excluded from greek society on Lesbos. Excluded from the (political) community but included in sovereign rule, far away from locals and tourists, this camp is bursting at its seams with three times more inhabitants than its capacity. The conditions of the camp are poor. Most people sleep rough in camping tents and makeshift shelters without heating. The food provided is inadequate according to

the residents of the camp and the waiting time for food distribution is excessively long. As a result people are waiting in line for a little bit of food for hours and hours a day. Residents of the camp feel treated *like animals*, and emphasize how living in the camp is a dehumanizing experience.

The allocation of certain types of housing facilities to certain specific national groups, and the bureaucratic discrimination between nationalities concerning asylum procedures, fuels tension between national groups. Tensions that regularly lead to aggressive confrontation between national groups in the camp. Most violent outburst however, are a result frustration and despair boiling over, directing itself to the camp and the asylum institutions itself. The hopeless conditions in the camp; food, housing, violence and endless uncertainty breed unstable mental health conditions for the residents of the camp, on top of those traumatic experiences most residents already have to cope with.

After the Eu Turkey deal, many non governmental humanitarian organisations refused to continue working in the camp. One of them; 'Euro Relief', stayed, and is now in charge of most of the day to day management of the camp. While it's not a black and white issue, this mormon organisation is unpopular in Moria and residents accuse them for secretly trying to convert people to christianity and criticize them for being an extension of the police inside the camp. Humanitarian aid inside the camp this way has adopted the biopolitical function of care and management, becoming an important instrument for the execution of sovereign politics. The police itself is only present in the camp to (violently) respond to protests and to make certain that everyone behaves disciplined. In situation of interpersonal conflicts and violence, theft or other situations in which resident might need help or protection, the police is not there for them.

While in theory residents of the camp are free to leave the camp, in practise they face great challenges. It's a long 2 hour walk from camp to the town of Mytilene and the police often arrests people walking down that road, especially after dark. Anywhere outside the camp special police forces are actively looking for migrants, under the banner of a drug search, police is hunting for migrants without the right papers and most of the time forces migrants to come to the police station and be detained for some hours, to undress and be searched for drugs. Fear for

police arrests prevents some residents of camp Moria from coming into the city. It's part of policy of discouragement, dehumanisation and containment that is actually succeeding in such a way that migrants, drained of all hope and energy, eventually sign up for 'voluntary' deportation.

Some migrants however, try to completely avoid Moria; on the streets, in parks, in tents and occasionally even in rented small apartments they manage to lay low and evade sovereign control. However, repression is severe and fewer and fewer actually manage to stay out of the suffocating embrace of the sovereign.

Organized in occupied buildings

migrants and volunteers in solidarity with them, create and re-configure spaces into true counter sites; spaces of self determination and humanity. And while by far not utopian, these spaces *do* establish a situation in which community can be build and in which horizontal relationships of mutual aid can grow, resisting being made into pervers non-beings, breathing life back into the hearts and minds of its residents. Instead of being pushed away and concentrated into the hinterlands of Mytilini migrants claim and 'take up space' in Greek society, both spatially as socially. Just like these occupations of buildings, do the regular demonstrations and occupations of the central square by migrants show how they are actively claiming back and exposing their (political) existence, refusing to be stripped down of those qualities that make them human.

Through organizing and living together, volunteers and migrants try to build horizontal relationships, refusing to reproduce the social relationships that the border imposes and creates in places like the camp. Where people are either: inmates, victims, clients, patients & animals, *or*; humans, officials, cops, Frontex, doctors, helpers & good samaritans. However, Also these spaces of resistance are not unaffected by the 'outside world'. Differences in privilege create challenges for true egalitarian organisation, like the challenge of overcoming relationships of dependency while (financial) resources are coming from one 'side'. Existing tensions and frustration on the island do also penetrate these 'spaces of others doing', occasionally leading to conflicts. However, people in the squats did also never believe to live in a utopia, sometimes conflict of course arises specifically because people make an effort in doing things in a *different way*, which can lead to friction and therefore sometimes; to sparks. The discourse of struggle is embraced

by those inhabiting the squats, and that is- more than some might be aware of- not only applicable to grant political topics like the struggle for open borders of nationstates, but especially to the struggle right there, at that moment, in that place, to be able to build community, autonomous from state or humanitarian aid, based on solidarity and equality. These spaces are performing prefigurative politics of equality, in resistance to a power that aims for totalitarianism. Undoubtedly, that's going with trial and error. The space of the old squat and the community surrounding it did however, manifest itself as a true 'countersite' to contemporary biopolitical border politics; A site that performed community instead of division, affirmed responsibility and agency instead of dependency and emphasized political existence instead of bare biological existence.

How is power exercised over migrant on Lesbos, and in what way are these powers resisted?

Bio-political power is exercised in the state of exception that Lesbos has been made into.. This exceptional state made possible a politics of encampment and animalization where migrants are stripped of those qualities that define their humanity. Using detention and deportation as the ultimate tool of sovereign politics, the aim of the border is to be totalitarian and the geography of Lesbos considerably contributes to that goal, because it captures, constraints and concentrates migrants and their mobility; making them easier to manage; turning them and directing them into a 'flow'. A Police force is actively moving anyone outside, back into the space of the camp it. Making sure migrants remain subjects of sovereign power. The production of bare life is evident; traumatized, 'numb', hopeless & tired, there are migrants that retreat into the camp. Overpowered by the sovereign power of the border they adopt and internalize their animalization, passing their days in a indistinct limbo between fact and law. Some take drastic measures like signing up for voluntary deportation, or committing, - perhaps as a last act of self-determination- suicide.

While the former paragraph is a substantial part of the conclusion of my research, it is not the full story. Supported by an 'autonomous gaze' I have found many expression of productive power of migrants on Lesbos. Productive power that is resisting sovereign control and its aim of totalitarianism. Although within

the camp sovereign control seems to be strongest, even there people find ways to subvert, contest or simply ignore power. From creating networks of knowledge about possibilities for mobility and organizing protests against unequal asylum procedures to burning down the Asylum office containers. These actions show how sovereign power is not absolute, and is perhaps more relational than the sovereign would wish. Other expressions of active resistance to power is found outside the camp, in squats near the city of Mytilene, where migrant and volunteers live together and organize themselves. Finding ways to relate to each other that do not reproduce a social order imposed by the border. By building a diverse community of solidarity and by affirming the political existence of migrants, these places become true countersites to the border regime.

The ability of migrant to move, decentralized and autonomous from flows directed by the state is demonstrated by all the people who *do* make it through the border. The border fails to succeed in becoming totalitarian. An obvious conclusion would be that autonomous movement is resistance against the powers of the border. However I believe, it seems closer to the truth to phrase that the other way around; the border regime is resisting the powers of autonomous migration. Emphasizing indeed, that control reacts to mobility, instead of the other way around. On Lesbos, the creative and diverse force of migration is met by enormous powers. Power that produces bare life, imprisons and results in thousands of deaths at the border. However, like I have presented, even on Lesbos this power never realizes to be absolute, as the productive and creative force of migration shows that it always finds its way.

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