

Radboud University



Unpacking deservingness

An ethnographic study on the construction of deservingness through humanitarian and solidarity practices in Greece.

Master's thesis Human Geography – Globalization, Migration and Development

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*Photo on the front page: Chizh, K. (2021). *Walking shadows*. Retrieved from <https://gr.pinterest.com/pin/364228688622655632/> on December 23rd 2022.

Preface

I would never finish this thesis without the support I received from many people. First of all, I would like to thank all of my informants because, without their contribution and willingness to help me, this thesis would not exist. Special thanks go to all the amazing people that I met at Khora Community Centre who gave me the opportunity to do my research without any limitation. I feel very grateful to my two supervisors, Joris Schapendonk and Mirjam Wajsberg, who were always there, willing to help and guide me through the process with their very helpful and encouraging comments. Additionally, I would like to thank my best friends in Nijmegen, Noor, Sandra, and Babette, because, despite covid circumstances, we had our small “team” of support.

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Executive Summary

This study explores the notion of deservingness in the lives of people on the move. It intends to capture how deservingness is constructed through humanitarian and solidarity practices in Greece. Chronically, it focuses on the years after 2016, when the EU-Turkey Agreement was signed and brought about a changing reality for movers arriving in the country. Drawing on the concepts of hotspot geopolitics and geosocial solidarity, as well as legal precarity, humanitarianism, and solidarity in Greece, it aims to unpack the different understandings of deservingness on a theoretical level. This research is based on fieldwork and interviews conducted mainly in Athens, Greece, from May until August 2021.

Diving into the empirical parts, at first, it intends to provide valuable insights regarding movers' interaction with the Greek Asylum Services. Special focus is paid to the culture of disbelief existing in the practices of the Greek asylum caseworkers. In conjunction with that, especially under the current circumstances due to the EU-Turkey Agreement, the notions of nationality and vulnerability have been developed into deserving criteria for people on the move. Therefore, it discusses the problematic aspects of deploying those two concepts as classification mechanisms.

Afterward, the research dives into the practices of the so-called "rescue branch" of the "migration industry". To begin with, it aims at illustrating the diverse understandings between humanitarianism and solidarity to show the diversity in the approaches of the "helping hands". In humanitarian practices, deservingness is linked to particular understandings of vulnerability but also diligence. Concerning solidarity practices, although initially, the relationships seem horizontal compared to humanitarianism, they are also affected by the hierarchies of deservingness.

Furthermore, this study captures movers' experiences concerning their deservingness in the Greek context. Specifically, it discusses their interactions and understandings concerning the Greek asylum procedure. It examines the semi-legality that characterizes the Greek bureaucracy to illustrate how being granted asylum has been converted into a "jackpot process". Additionally, it explores movers' navigational tactics and strategies in the state of waiting and how handling limbo is approached as a deserving criterion. Combined with that, this thesis analyzes the "rescue branch" as a common encounter in many movers' pathways stating that the boundaries between care and control are blurred.

To conclude, this research approaches deservingness as a non-fixed notion that obtains diverse configurations based on the context. The normalization of performance-based deservingness confirms that people on the move are expected to adopt a set of attitudes to become deserving. That expectation implies the racialized lines attached to specific mobilities, which significantly restrict our understanding of being on the move.

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List of Acronyms

AIDA: Asylum Information Database
EASO: European Asylum Support Office
EU: European Union
IOM: International Organization for Migration
KAST: Khora Asylum Support Team
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
RSM: Refugee Solidarity Movement
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Chapter 1 | Introduction

“...Life in Greece has never been easy...you have to really fight for what is your right, dignified life in Greece is odd... It is not only about those that they live on islands, but even those that they live on the mainland are facing the same sorts of problems... even if you have your house ...and you live in Athens...you can find that there are many things that they need to be worked for, and you need to you know... somehow, you cannot, you know, get to easily. So I think that the system is really unfair... I haven't been in another EU country, but I assume this is some of Europe... all members are the same.... having camps and you know, keeping them for a long time. Keeping them far from the rest of the population... My sister is in Germany, and she says that she lives in the camp, the camp is far from the metro station, and it [is] a long-distance and after that the metro is, and it is a very long way to be in the center. I didn't know that they're even in Germany, the system [is] the same, and the government is trying to put families and refugees, apart from the rest of the population ...So this is not only about Greece, Greece is all the symbolic example to show that how refugees are treated in Europe because it's the gate of Europe, it is the margin... And also [in] one of the questions it is written.... [Is it] what you expected [living in Greece]... In fact, we didn't have much expectation...” (Deena, mover)

With Deena, we met online in mid-August 2021. Deena is a young female writer and activist from Afghanistan. She arrived in Lesbos, Greece, in 2019 with her family, and afterward, they were relocated to the camp of Ritsona, in the north of Athens, from where they wait for the assessment of their asylum applications. In the meantime, Deena teaches English, is a pioneer figure in a refugee initiative, and a fervent activist. She wants to follow under-graduate studies in social sciences, and she published her first book with her poets in 2020.

1.1 Research Problem

Deena's account introduces how the politics of exhaustion are deployed in their institutionalized forms of violence (Ansem de Vries & Welander, 2021; Wajsberg, 2020) to impose the migration control policies toward border-crossers (Rozakou, 2021) and people experiencing long-time legal precarity in Greece. Nevertheless, her vignette confirms how people on the move create opportunities, a world of knowledge, information, tricks of survival, mutual care, social relations, sociability, and solidarity that can be shared and utilized (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013, p. 103) to transcend and therefore transform the machine of control (Kliminiotis, Parsanoglou & Tsianos, 2016).

During the 2015-2016 long summer of migration (Oikonomakis, 2018; Rozakou, 2021), the fears for mass migration and claims of a “crisis” came to a boiling point within the European Union (EU) (Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2020). Greece, since 2015, has become theatre on the stage of politics of exhaustion, with a combination of fragmented mobilities, daily violence, and fundamental uncertainty (Ansems de Vries & Guild, 2019). The unpreparedness on the national level (on the EU level as well) has contributed to the game between “security” and “rule of law” concerning the first reception of the newcomers (Tsitselikis, 2018). The narratives of a “crisis” in 2015 gave and continue to give the misleading impression of “spontaneous arrivals” (Ansems de Vries & Guild, 2019). The lack of infrastructure and the incapacity to document, register, and process claims of asylum, harsh exclusion lines, and constant shifts between “legal” and “illegal” (Tsitselikis, 2018) have forced many people to live in precarity also before 2015 (Cabot, 2014; see also Box 1).

Box 1: The chronic “crisis” of asylum in Greece

Greece is situated on the external border of the EU at the cross roads of three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa) and has been a crucial pathway of entry for people on the move (Afouxenidis, Petrou, Kandyli, Tramountanis & Giannaki, 2017). Greece was marked by multiple departures and arrivals (Lafazani, 2021) during the last century; the arrival of refugees from Minor Asia in 1922/1923, the emigration of thousands of Greeks to countries of the Global North, the massive migration movement toward the country from Balkan and Eastern European countries in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union (Lafazani, 2021, p.3) and in the 2000s as a result of social, economic and political upheaval in Asia and Africa (Afouxenidis et al., 2017, p.7). Despite this history of mobility, migration to the Greece was handled in terms of “illegality” concerning entry, stay and work (Lafazani, 2021). That practice was in agreement with the demands of precarious labor which was utilized for the image of a “Powerful Greece” in the early 2000s (Lafazani, 2021).

According to Ioannidis, Dimou & Dadusc (2021), until 2010, Greece had almost non-existent facilities to identify people who were entitled to international protection. The reception system was police-centered with policemen acting as caseworkers. That combined with the shortages of human resources, trained personnel and the well-established correlation between Greek police and far-right politics created an inexistent system of protection, with recognition rates around 0.06% in 2003 (Ioannidis et al., 2021). Cabot (2014) argues that asylum applications were increased by more than five times between 2004 and 2007 from 4,469 to 25,113, but in 2006 only 64 people acquired refugee status and 2007 only 140 (Cabot, 2014, p.5). In 2010, the practical inexistence of an asylum system and the crimimigrant tones embedded in it led to a backlog 52,000 unprocessed cases (Ioannidis et al., 2021; Cabot, 2018). That confirms that a “crisis” of asylum existed prior the 2015 “refugee crisis” in Greece .

Especially from 2015, an assortment of actors with diverse interests started to be involved in refugee support. The absence of the state gave space to informal solidarity initiatives to “take partly the charge” (Oikonomakis, 2018). However, with the closure

of the Balkan route and the signing of the EU-Turkey Agreement in 2016, the state adopted a more actively hostile role which led to an explicit exclusion of the Refugee Solidarity Movement (RSM) from having access to the newcomers and other practices such as evicting squats and other informal forms of care. Simultaneously, the only actors responsible for providing care services to the moving populations became non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and formal organizations (Oikonomakis, 2018; Teloni, Dedotsi & Telonis, 2020; Cantat, 2021). Oikonomakis (2018) argues that the EU-Turkey Agreement led to the exhaustion of both people on the move and the local communities, while the dominant frame of solidarity started to fade away. The solidarity movement had to get back in advocacy work, while the professionals took over the humanitarian aspects (Oikonomakis, 2018, p. 87).

The main interest of this study is the construction of deservingness through humanitarian and solidarity practices for people experiencing precarity in Greece. In the migration regime, the many hands, including street-level bureaucrats and non-state, private, (in) formal actors operate on local, national, and transnational levels (Eule, Borelli, Lindberg & Wyss, 2019, p.190) and constitute the so-called “migration industry”. Those actors and the variety of their conflicting interests, rationalities, and positions have made migration a big business (Sørensen & Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013). That commercialization could not be absent from the Greek context. Through that, opportunities to capitalize on individuals’ desire to move, emerge through facilitating or controlling their path (Sørensen & Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013). The multiplicity of actors and interests increases the blurriness between responsibilities and creates an intersection of policing, patrolling, caring, and rescuing (Eule et al., 2019, p. 190) and, by extension, produces diverse hierarchies of deservingness for people on the move. Gaining a deeper understanding of the tension between legibility and illegibility in terms of state documentation practices (Mainwaring & Walton-Roberts, 2018) and beyond that, is essential in interpreting movers’ deservingness and their trajectories. Understanding the regimes of deservingness is crucial because it confirms the role of state-regulated mechanisms in controlling and categorizing individuals.

Beyond the diverse logics within the migration industry, the most significant tool in this study is the personal accounts of people experiencing precarity in Greece. Understanding how individuals perceive being (un) deserving in the Greek context can bring valuable insights into what extent people feel obliged to be adapted to the imposed norms to be eligible for support. Also, that can help us comprehend how movers can utilize certain attitudes according to “deservingness criteria” to facilitate their navigation and how citizenship’s primordial canons (Meeteren & Sur, 2020, p.547) are challenged by that. Examining the construction of deservingness helps comprehend the pains and the pleasure of individuals’ (im) mobility. By extension, understanding deservingness enriches our knowledge concerning the non-linearity of migration processes (Schapendonk, Bolay & Dahinden, 2020) and encourages us to consider the importance of decision-making, synergies, alliances, aspirations, social

networks, and circumstances of pure luck which create a fluid, constantly under negotiation environment.

1.2 Scientific relevance

As aforementioned, this study investigates how deservingness is shaped by humanitarian and solidarity practices. Through re-introducing the concepts of hotspot geopolitics and geo-social solidarity, my goal is to contribute to the academic debate of opposing “politics” to “humanitarianism” and “charity” to “solidarity” (Cantat, 2018). That can enrich our understanding concerning how EU and Greek migration and asylum regimes produce specific regimes of deservingness and vulnerability (Cantat, 2018; Chauvin & Mascareñas, 2014), which lead to new “legal” geographies that are unbounded, bureaucratic, and intend to exclude movers from accessing any rights (Mainwaring & Walton-Roberts, 2018). Furthermore, it aims to lead to a deeper understanding of the alternative political subjectivities emerging through alternative forms of care. That brings important insights into how the deviance from citizenship discourses, border violence, and mobility governance are contested (Cantat, 2016).

Additionally, this research contributes to studies on responsabilization, i.e., the mechanisms by which individuals are rendered responsible for tasks that fall under the state’s domain (Dijstelbloem & van der Veer, 2021; Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010). As aforementioned, within the migration industry, the shifting tasks and interests have created overlapping liabilities between state and non-state actors, which comes with a process of responsabilization. From my perspective, the sense of responsabilization, especially for non-state actors occupied in the so-called “rescue industry”, deserves further investigation, as the actions of NGOs (not always), local volunteer groups are positioned as countering the authorities’ practices (Dijstelbloem & van der Veer, 2021, p. 432).

Furthermore, this study intends to address questions concerning movers’ social networks, motivations to be mobile, imaginations, experiences, and decision-making. Therefore, it takes as a starting point the multidimensionality of the migration processes, the individuals’ subjectivities, and, by extension, the experiences of deservingness. In line with that, an attempt for de-migranticization (Dahinden, 2016) is particularly significant. The sedentarist, state-centered interpretations of migration fail to consider the multidimensionality of human identity (Dahinden, Fischer & Menet, 2021) and approach specific types of people’s movement as an exceptional pre-given marker of difference (Schapendonk et al., 2020). Those approaches ignore the power of migration bureaucracies and mobility regimes, which through the naturalization of the borders (Amelina, 2021) and the normativity of the migrants’ categories, affect the experience of people on the move (Schapendonk et al., 2020). That normalization produces specific social realities and inequalities (Dahinden 2016;

Amelina, 2021) about eligibility in granting asylum, the capacity to move, receiving help, etc.

In Greece, an attempt to de-migranticize and challenge the existing labeling is particularly significant as people, regardless of their “label status” remain in precarity (Cabot, 2014). However, the trajectories of individuals with different categorical labels intersect and intertwine (Schapendonk et al., 2020). That suggests the failure of assigning labels. As aforementioned, Greek demands for precarious labor, chronic insufficiencies, and arbitrary classifications show the inadequacy of assigning labels. Also, an attempt to change “the dominant vocabulary” in public discourse is necessary. Since 2015, the dominant descriptions are about a “crisis” and “illegal crossings”, which subordinate the issue to a sudden event of unprecedented pressure (Spathopoulou & Carastathis, 2020; Cantan, 2016) and allow a state of exception in which every kind of handling is acceptable (Cantat, 2016). Concerning deservingness, the narratives of a “crisis” render the flows of people since 2015 as “exceptional” (Vradis, Papada, Papoutsi & Painter, 2020). Therefore, their treatment and what they deserve should be exceptional. That state of exception can also be related to the labels as it legitimizes the categorization of people and finally politicizes their movement (Schapendonk et al., 2020).

1.3 Societal relevance

From 2015 or even before, the Greek policies related to asylum and migration issues derive from a dogma of deterrence to discourage people on the move. Those policies are in total harmony with the EU policy of militarizing border security (Human rights 360, 2020). The absence of a coherent and sufficient policy in Greece makes the country a particularly interesting example, as many people have experienced legal precarity regardless of their status, not only after 2015 but also before (Cabot, 2014). As aforementioned, in the previous decades, Greece was marked by multiple arrivals, which were illegalized and racialized by the dominant policies, but also utilized for the “Greek economic growth” of the previous decade (Lafazani, 2020).

Since 2015, with the consolidation of the Mediterranean as a massively pursued route, the Greek state could not sweep the issue under the carpet, and dominant discourse about “criminals invading Europe” could no longer hold (Garelli, Sciurba & Tazzioli, 2018). Since 2015, the “refugee crisis” narratives implied that among the people on the move, few of them are “genuine refugees” and deserve protection. From my perspective, those narratives have produced and consolidated stereotypes of movers as “threats”, “victims”, or exclusively coming from specific nationalities (Kyriakidou, 2020). Those stereotypes reinforce the binary division between “genuine refugees” and economic migrants, while the latter is further demonized as the abuser of the asylum system and constructed as the less deserving. Thereby, this study aims to explain how the construction of refugee, migrant, asylum seeker is fundamentally a

political action (Goodman & Speer, 2007, p.179) and how those categorizations are crucial for the legitimacy or illegitimacy of movers' claims. By extension, it is essential to consider how those classifications "encourage" and impose a narrow understanding of human mobility (Kyriakidou, 2020).

After the closure of the Balkan route and the signing of the EU-Turkey Agreement in 2016, the message by the Greek state (the EU as well) was clear: "Newcomers are not welcome"(Oikonomakis, 2018), while the governments followed a more aggressive attitude towards informal solidarity practices (Oikonomakis, 2018; Karaliotas & Kapsali, 2020) and clear outsourcing of sheltering and care to formal humanitarian organizations and NGOs (Teloni et al., 2020). It is important to understand this changing reality from 2016 and afterward to interpret how solidarity and humanitarian practices are constructed in the current political context in Greece and the role of politics in their actions (Siapera, 2019). After 2016, the attempt to weaken solidarity practices that were informal and unambiguously in opposition to the governmental policy became clear. Furthermore, informal initiatives to continue their actions were obliged to formalize their role and fulfill stricter conditions (Cantat, 2021). That implies an obligation to keep up with governmental practices. This research can bring valuable insights into the unseen practices of solidarity and humanitarianism as well as how people on the move perceive and approach them. For example, examining what constitutes "acceptable and successful performance" in humanitarian and solidarity practices can lead to a deeper understanding of how people are possibly categorized to more and less deserving for their access to care and, by extension, what kind of emotions their "responsibility" to behave in a certain way provokes to them.

1.4 Research objectives & Research question

This research gains empirical insights into the enactment of deservingness in the lives of movers in Greece and how deservingness is distributed by humanitarian and solidarity practices. Therefore, my goal is to examine:

- What the frame of deservingness means for people experiencing legal precarity in the Greek context
- How humanitarian and solidarity practices are shaped within the current political context in Greece and the role of politics in them.
- Whether people who "fit" to the frame of the deserving migrant benefit from the Greek asylum procedure, humanitarian and solidarity practices compared to the others and how individuals react and interpret it.
- How people experiencing legal precarity perceive their interaction with the Greek asylum bureaucracy, humanitarian and solidarity practices

From the objectives aforementioned, the research question and the sub-questions are as follows:

How is deservingness of movers enacted by the humanitarian practices and solidarity practices in Greece, and how do they perceive these practices?

With “deservingness”, I refer to a range of features and attitudes that contribute to individuals’ discriminatory classification concerning eligibility to asylum and support. Additionally, with “movers”, I refer to individuals on the move who have spent time or are still in Greece. In terms of bureaucratic labels, I include recognized refugees in Greece and abroad, asylum seekers, individuals who have not accessed or do not want to, the Greek asylum system. I preferred to use the term “mover” instead of “migrant” as this study intends to “de-migranticize” and underline how these nation-state-centered categories reproduce social and political exclusion (Dahinden et al., 2021). Under humanitarian practices, I include practices of various actors; state and European agencies, international and local bodies, and civil society actors that constitute the formal forms of care. With solidarity practices, I refer to practices operated by activist citizens, grassroots groups, squatters, non-border movements, and non-citizen migrant groups, who are conceived as “radicals” or “naïve romanticists” (Kalir & Wissink, 2016) and represent unconventional forms of care.

And my sub-questions:

1. *How, when, and by whom is deservingness enacted by the Greek asylum procedure for movers in Greece?*

This first sub-question aims to illustrate the culture of disbelief and the semi-legal character of the Greek asylum system. Combined with that, the respective chapter (Chapter 4) scrutinizes how people on the move in Greece are categorized through the asylum bureaucracy based on criteria such as nationality and vulnerability and how that influences their deservingness and trajectories.

2. *How, when, and by whom is deservingness enacted in humanitarian and solidarity practices for movers in Greece?*

With this sub-question, I examine the role of humanitarian and solidarity practices and their different meanings. By approaching humanitarianism and solidarity as practice, I intend to get a better understanding of the institutional web of actors involved in facilitating and controlling people's trajectories (Merlín -Escorza, Davids & Schapendonk, 2020) as well as deservingness. Simultaneously, through this sub-question, I aim to gain valuable insights into the dilemmas, obstacles and struggles that the humanitarians and solidarians encounter within the current political context.

3. *How is the layered deservingness lived and experienced by movers in Greece?*

Through the interpretations of deservingness by movers, I intend to understand how they perceive the Greek asylum bureaucracy, solidarity, and humanitarian practices. Specifically, I aim to comprehend individuals' feelings concerning performance-based deservingness to become eligible for support. Combined with that, my goal is to illustrate how beyond and within deservingness models, they build their social networks and synergies.

1.5 Organization of the thesis

This study is composed of seven chapters. After this first chapter, chapter 2 discusses the most relevant concepts and approaches related to the notion of deservingness. Specifically, it introduces the contradicting understandings between the "hotspot approach" and geo-social solidarity to illustrate the diverse configurations concerning deservingness through humanitarian and solidarity practices. Important elements in zooming in on the Greek context are a deeper analysis of humanitarianism and solidarity in Greece, as well as the notion of precarity. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodological setup that was used for conducting this study and detecting deservingness through humanitarian and solidarity practices. Particularly, it explains the choices of methods and concludes with a reflection concerning the ethics, validity, challenges, and outcomes of this research. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are the empirical chapters of this study and intend to answer each sub-question. Chapter 4 examines how deservingness is articulated in the Greek asylum procedure, and chapter 5 focuses on the practices of the so-called "rescue branch". Chapter 6 concentrates on movers' experience regarding their deservingness in the Greek context. The last chapter (7) is the conclusion of the thesis and includes a reflection concerning the procedure as well as possible recommendations for future research and policy.

Chapter 2 | Theorizing movers' deservingness

2.1 Hotspot geopolitics & Geo-social solidarity

Although the so-called “hotspot approach” was introduced by the EU in 2015 (Sciurba, 2017; Spathopoulou, Carastathis & Tsilimpounidi, 2020), it did not arrive out of the blue (Vardis et al., 2016). It should be considered as a mechanism in full harmony with the attempts of the EU, throughout the decades, to externalize the Union's border regime (Vardis et al., 2016) to manage the “undesirables” on the move and “safeguard” EU values (Pallister- Wilkins, 2020; Mitchell & Sparke, 2020). The hotspot approach depicts the Europeanisation of Migration and Asylum policy (Vradis et al., 2020). It constitutes the governance mechanism through which European agencies such as the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Frontex, Europol cooperate with border Member States to manage the migratory movement at the EU frontiers (Pallister-Wilkins, 2020; Vradis et al., 2020; Vradis et al., 2016; Antonakaki, Bernd & Maniatis, 2016). Hotspots are poorly defined by the EU, and the legal framework behind them remains relatively unclear. That absence of a concrete legal framework transforms the cross-border regions into spaces where the activities happening are not under national or European standards and are often in opposition to laws concerning international protection and basic human rights (Sciurba, 2017). The description of hotspots in public discourse has been related to sites of uncontrollable pressure and great danger at the external borders (Vradis et al., 2020; Sciurba, 2017). Those narratives of pressure and danger foster the language of a crisis and legitimize every kind of emergency response as the situation is outside of someone's responsibility.

Hotspots function as spaces of reception, identification, fingerprinting, and registration border control (DeBono, 2019). Spathopoulou et al. (2020) argue that for the European and Greek authorities, the so-called “refugee crisis” in 2015 was defined as a problem of categorization because the people arriving at the borders were considered as “mixed migratory flows”. The implementation of the hotspot approach came as the ideal tool in distinguishing the eligible to apply for asylum from the ineligible (Spathopoulou et al., 2020; Sciurba, 2017), the “forced” from “economic” migrants (Fassin, 2016; Antonakaki et al., 2016). Their function as such reflects the power in governing populations and, by extension, in categorizing them (Pallister-Wilkins, 2020; Vradis et al., 2020). The consolidation of specific criteria and conditions among people of different nationalities, ethnicities, gender, and class renders hotspots spaces of segregation, where the deserving populations are divided from the undeserving.

The hotspots are considered spaces where humanitarianism unfolds. Due to their design, humanitarian agencies are considered essential in providing care services (Pallister-Wilkins, 2020). Pallister-Wilkins (2017) calls “humanitarian borderwork” the urgent humanitarian action taking place to alleviate the consequences of border violence produced by the state of exception. Humanitarian borderwork in emergency response is exercised by classifying distinct life categories (Pallister-Wilkins, 2017). In the Greek hotspot of Vial in Chios, Antonakaki et al. (2016) witnessed the rise of vulnerability as an erosive and divisive power in granting asylum. Being recognized as vulnerable makes a person more deserving and eligible for being fast-tracked, leaving the hotspot, and being relocated to the mainland (Antonakaki et al., 2016). Similarly, Spathopoulou et al. (2020) argue that hotspots are biopolitical spaces of performative enactment of vulnerability (p.3), where the deserving subjects are separated from the undeserving. Governing people through vulnerability criteria and forcing people to adopt the label of being vulnerable (Cabot, 2014) subordinates individuals into victims and also deliberately ignores the harms produced through those practices (Squire, 2018).

In our interpretation of hotspots, we should focus beyond the physical infrastructure at the borders of the EU. Hotspot approach functions as a flexible mechanism that categorizes and forces people to experience a constant limbo through fast-track assessments, labels, and discriminative legislative scrutiny (Vradis et al., 2020; Tazzioli & Garelli, 2020; Sciurba, 2017). Spathopoulou et al. (2020) describe them as geographies of vulnerabilities where the asylum is utilized as a redistributive mechanism of scarce good citizenship (p. 3). Tazzioli & Garelli (2020) suggest the term “containment” describing hotspots, as mechanisms beyond the detention facilities, which regulate and govern migrants’ movements (Tazzioli & Garelli, 2020; Vradis et al., 2020; Artero & Fontanari, 2021). Spathopoulou & Carastathis (2020) introduce the concept “mobile hotspot” to show that hotspot is not static and the hierarchies of deservingness are not restricted in the Greek islands but are extended in the mainland to facilitate EU’s segregations projects. Regarding the non-static nature of hotspots, their utilization as a mechanism of disciplining migratory movement deepens the clandestinization of individuals, as the majority of rejected asylum seekers are not physically removed (Spathopoulou et al., 2020; Sciurba, 2017). Informal hotspots are proliferated in the mainland by making people invisible, the naturalized racial discourses and policies (Spathopoulou & Carastathis, 2020).

In contrast to the top-down construction of hotspots, geo-social practices of solidarity are presented as the alternative for creating safe spaces based on a mix of transnational and local embodied forms of social justice (Mitchell & Sparke, 2020). Mitchell & Kallio (2016) define *geosocial* as a way of conceptualizing the formation of subjects and spaces within transnational relations (p.1). Building on feminist and critical geopolitics, geosocial solidarity as a method of analysis takes as a preliminary starting point that the “political” and “the spatial” can be approached from diverse

perspectives that do not carry fixed presumptions about the connections of people's lived realities (Mitchell & Kallio, 2016, p.10).

Inspired by resistance and resilience, geo-social practices of solidarity are defined as embodied space-making strategies as well as struggles that support migrants' agency, autonomy, liberty, and resistance (Mitchell & Sparke, 2020). Geo-social solidarity practices are emerged out of human connectivity and mutual respect that, by extension, can lead to the realization of shared vulnerabilities and struggles between migrants and non-migrants (Mitchell & Sparke, 2020; Cantat, 2018; Raimondi, 2019). Sparke & Mitchell (2018a) deploy the term "geosocial throwntogetherness" (Massey, 2005) to describe the local jumbling of diverse human geographies (p.216), which can lead to the co-existence of local and transnational alliances of migrant activism. Through focusing on the creation of alternative political identities and socialities (Cantat, 2018), geo-social solidarity gives the stimulus for new demands for cosmopolitan citizenship (Mitchell & Sparke, 2018b; Cantat, 2018) which contest the social and spatial hierarchies (Raimondi, 2019).

Through the geo-social practices, the images of migrants as threats or victims are challenged, while their agency and the role of their support networks are confirmed (Mitchell & Sparke, 2020). Spathopoulou & Carastathis (2020) refer to the concept of the hotspot of resistance to show how people resist the imposed "bordered reality" and territorial labeling (Mitchell & Sparke, 2020). In line with that, Sparke & Mitchell (2018a), in their study concerning the solidarity group *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, argue that the group became the voice of people to show their unwillingness to accept the politics of rejection and victimhood (p.220). Geo-social solidarity challenges the hotspot approach and shows the limitations of humanitarianism. Precarity is transformed into agency (Mitchell & Sparke, 2018b) and poses an alternative against the re-production of illegalized bodies (Dadusc & Mudu, 2020). According to Dadusc & Mudu (2018), in practices of solidarity, the refusal to legal obligations and cooperation with the authorities is a way to provoke "cracks" and resist the commodification of migrants' lives and de-politicization of border violations (p.3). In opposition to the hierarchy of asylum within the hotspot logics, spaces in which geo-social solidarity practices are exercised, divisive strategies seem to be avoided. For example, in City Plaza, a former self-organized squat for refugees in Athens, people were included based on diversity and not vulnerability characteristics (Squire, 2018).

To conclude, although migrants involved in geo-social solidarity spaces still have to encounter the geopolitics of hotspot in the form of labeling and bureaucratic obstacles, geo-social solidarity still negotiates the bordered realities and represents alternative hospitality (Mitchell & Sparke, 2018b). Mitchell & Sparke (2020) argue that those solidarity practices combined with the struggle for dignity, autonomy, and spatial liberty can be considered as assemblages of post-liberal and anti-liberal features of humanitarianism. In Foucauldian terms, Mitchell & Sparke (2020) conceptualize solidarity practices as forms of personalized and socialized forms of

“making live”, which are constrained but exist despite the liberal biopolitics of European governmentality.

2.2 Legal precarity in Greece

According to Jørgensen (2015), the neologism “precariat” is an amalgam of “precarity” and “proletariat” (p.3) and was adopted by labor activists and social movements during the 1980s-1990s to describe the employment conditions and social environment, but also the formation of heterogeneous identities within neo-liberalism. Jørgensen (2015), Schierup & Jørgensen (2016), and Papatzani, Psallidaki, Kandyli & Micha (2021) argue that the migrant is a key figure in understanding precarity due to the precarization in multiple aspects of life but also due to the strategies and struggles emerging from this condition. Precarity is defined as being synonymous with uncertainty and unpredictability (Paret & Gleeson, 2016; McIlwaine & Bunge, 2019). It is connected with the experience of vulnerability and insecurity (Banki, 2013). Precarity should be considered a multi-dimensional analysis category (Ilcan, Rygiel & Baban, 2018). It is related to diverse forms of uncertainty in status, space, and movement, the so-called ambiguous architecture of precarity (Ilcan et al., 2018).

The precarity of status refers to the unclear socio-legal status assigned to individuals by the governing authorities (Ilcan et al., 2018). Legal precarity is related to the lack of formal citizenship and the precarity of place. The precarity of place denotes the absence of privileges and benefits of being a state’s national (Banki, 2013; Papatzani et al., 2021). That increases the vulnerability to deportation from a location and is connected with other precarities such as precarious employment and livelihood (Paret & Gleeson, 2016; Banki, 2013). On the other hand, living in uncertainty is not equal to the absence of agency and supportive networks (Banki, 2013). People in legal precarity make use of “navigational tactics” (Wajsberg, 2020; Schapendonk, 2020; McIlwaine & Bunge, 2019) to tackle the spatial, legal, and socio-economic invisibility they experience within the European migration regime. Practices such as social activism or attempting to disregard the restrictions and obstacles of the uncertain status (Wajsberg, 2020) indicate that uncertainty can be the cause for political mobilization (Ilcan et al., 2018; Paret & Gleeson, 2016; Wajsberg, 2020; Schierup & Jørgensen, 2016; Jørgensen, 2015).

Greece can be regarded as a country where the precarity for people on the move constructed by the migration and asylum policies contributes to uncertainty and temporariness (Wissink, Düvell & Mazzucato, 2020; Papatzani et al., 2021). The difficult access to asylum, lack of formal infrastructure, possible unfair assessment, fears for apprehension and deportation (Wissink et al., 2020; Cabot, 2014) on the one hand, the politics of care, the informal infrastructure of solidarity and connectivity on the other, depict the volatile environment for people experiencing legal precarity in

the country, but also show the potentialities for transformation and spatial politics (Trimikliniotis et al., 2016).

To conclude, interlinking migration and mobility with precarity can deepen our understanding concerning the interrelation of social and economic conditions with social struggles (Schierup & Jørgensen, 2016). We can understand how uncertainty is produced and governed by multiple actors, policies, and practices (Ilcan et al., 2019), such as bureaucratic structures and humanitarian agencies, to name but a few. In line with Papatzani et al. (2021), I argue that these practices produce hierarchies of precarity (p.11) as movers are treated unequally. Nevertheless, those practices can also be challenged by individuals' agency and networks as well as by alternative practices of solidarity and care. That makes precarity a dynamic and transforming process (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2019).

2.3 Understanding the construction of deservingness

According to Ratzmann & Sahraoui (2021), the concept of deservingness was popularized in academic circles by survey-based research on welfare attitudes to explain the conditions under which and the people with whom individuals are willing to share access to welfare resources (p.446). Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas (2014), concerning movers' deservingness, deploy the notion "performance-based deservingness" to describe a range of characteristics and attitude models that contribute to people's categorization as more or less deserving for their eligibility of help and by extension of citizenship. In line with that, Marchetti (2020) argues that the interrelation between behavior and status embedded in the regime of deservingness leads to the usurpation of the regime of rights and produces a staircase model that people should follow (p. 245) to be eligible for protection. Similarly, Monforte, Basse & Khan (2019) assert that the injunction to "performance-based deservingness" transforms the notion of citizenship into an element that has to be earned. Regarding "earning citizenship", through the governmentality lens, performance-based deservingness can be considered a product of responsabilization; under the state's influence, individuals feel obliged to fulfill specific tasks to become eligible and desirable. According to Monforte et al. (2019), the concept of deservingness is linked to the neoliberal understanding of citizenship, in which the subjects are constructed as "responsible, diligent citizens" capable of showing their civic and economic participation.

Holmes & Castañeda (2016) argue that the categories of deservingness are not neutral orderings (Wernesjö, 2020). Instead, they are built on existing stereotypes based on racialized and gendered evaluations of individuals related to kindness, credibility, and victimhood. For example, being law-abiding, culturally, and economically integrated (Sirriyeh, 2016; Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014; van Meeteren & Sur, 2020) combined with showing vulnerability, docility, and gratitude (Casati, 2018; Maestri &

Monforte, 2020) are among the attributes which make an individual more eligible of help, care and moral citizenship compared to others, who are labeled as non-eligible based on the nationality, non-vulnerable, troublemakers and disputatious (Casati, 2018). Therefore, the assessments of movers' deservingness can have both positive and negative implications, as well as even can determine movers' trajectories (Chauvin & Garcés- Mascareñas, 2014; Holmes & Castañeda, 2016).

Movers' deservingness unfolds on many levels (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016) and is exercised by multiple actors. The framings of people on the move, as well as the overlapping dichotomies, such as refugee/ economic migrant, legitimate/ illegitimate, are moral demarcations and shape the way that movers interact with state and non-state actors (Wernesjö, 2020), but also show how they perceive their deservingness. To examine the diverse meanings and understandings concerning deservingness embedded in the practices of different actors, the following sub-sections, based on previous literature, analyze the values, motivations, and possible moralities existing in humanitarian and solidarity practices in the Greek context, as well as movers' approaches towards deservingness. The goal of the particular analysis is to illustrate that deservingness is relational, conditional, context-dependent, and variable (Ratzmann & Sahraoui, 2021, p.447).

2.3.1 Understanding deservingness through the humanitarian lens

During the 2015-2016 long summer of migration in Greece (Oikonomakis, 2018), multiple actors from different ideological angles and with diverse intentions were involved in care practices around refugee and migrant rights (Papataxiarchis, 2016). Volunteers motivated by the call for help, activists by the vision of creating self-organized collectivities, NGOs by their profession, the locals by the duty, and others such as middlemen, social scientists, entrepreneurs (Papataxiarchis, 2016) constitute parts of the complex assemblage. NGO workers and representatives, the humanitarian actors in a broader sense, motivated by the "humanitarian reason", are considered the professionals of the story (Oikonomakis, 2018; Cabot, 2019).

Fassin (2011) defines "humanitarian reason" as the way through which moral sentiments gain a role in the political sphere. The notion is linked with charity, sympathy, and care but also with the tension between inequality and solidarity, domination and assistance (Stavinoha & Ramakrishnan, 2020). According to Dadusc & Mudu (2020), humanitarian work is framed as a work of care, a mission to reduce suffering without considering the politics behind the emergency that produce these very sufferings (p.7). In that space, vulnerability is commodified and developed into a mechanism of categorization (Dadusc & Mudu, 2020). About the technology of border enforcement, Walters (2010) defines "humanitarian border" as the proliferation of humanitarian aid and services on militarized borders (Williams, 2015, p.13).

Therefore, the "humanitarian border" is related to tactics of governmentality and securitization (Williams, 2015). In line with that, Pallister-Wilkins (2020) refers to the

intersection of care and control in governing and categorizing populations through vulnerability criteria. These features have made professional humanitarians be accused of adopting bureaucratic labels in offering their assistance (Rozakou, 2016), such as refugee/ economic migrant, vulnerable/non-vulnerable. Additionally, that, apart from reproducing exclusive categories of life (Pallister-Wilkins, 2017), consolidates the power relations and social hierarchies between “us”, the rescuers, and “them”, the victims (Pallister-Wilkins, 2017; Karaliotas & Kapsali, 2020). The impression of acting in the name of “good” on behalf of helpers gives humanitarianism a consensual and accepted tone (Aas & Gundhus, 2015).

That emphasis on suffering illustrates that the world of humanitarianism is populated by victims (Mezzandra, 2020, p.427). It is significant to consider that the focus on the innocent and vulnerable criminalizes the less vulnerable “guilty” (Ticktin, 2016). In contrast to the universal ideals of relieving suffering, humanitarian practices seem to produce hierarchies and new categories of life, based on vulnerability (Pallister-Wilkins, 2018). Governing through compassion can be conceptualized as a part of a broader assemblage and moral geographies which govern populations in total harmony with neoliberal politics, for this reason, care and control should be considered as constitutive parts not only of humanitarianism but also modern liberalism itself (Pallister-Wilkins, 2020).

2.3.2 Understanding deservingness through solidarity lens

Many authors (Cabot, 2020; Rozakou, 2016; Rakopoulos, 2016) argue that the emergence of initiatives that start from below and act horizontally has been permeating in Greece since the financial crisis in the country. Rakopoulos (2016), Theodossopoulos (2016), and Douzina-Bakalaki (2017) associate precarity with the politics of austerity in the country, which gave inspiration for solidarity practices in the context of daily life, such as social clinics, pharmacies, and markets (Cabot, 2019). As aforementioned, since 2015-2016, activists and solidarity initiatives have been involved in migrant support and attempted to facilitate the journey of the people on the move (Oikonomakis, 2018).

According to Rakopoulos (2016), solidarity refers to the variety of practices, forms of sociality, and mechanisms of building different prospects in people’s belonging and lives. Rakopoulos (2016) proposes that solidarity is borne out of precarity and functions as a bridge that brings people into relation and interdependence. Rozakou (2016b) argues that in Greece in recent years, an ontological-grammatical shift has been observed (Oikonomakis, 2018): the word solidarian (*alliléggios*) has changed from an adjective to a noun, which refers to a person who is in solidarity with others. According to Rozakou (2016b), that change indicates a radicalization of solidarity in austerity-ridden Greece, in social spaces where solidarity practices unfold. So, activists are called solidarians (Oikonomakis, 2018), and they have tried to

differentiate their practices from the formal humanitarian forms of care based on claims related to motivations and interests. Based on activists' claims, distinctions between those who are paid for their assistance and those who are not (Oikonomakis, 2018; Papataxiarchis, 2016) stress that interest and solidarity are mutually exclusive (Papataxiarchis, 2016). Additionally, solidararians argue that they reject the idea of charity (Raimondi, 2019; Rakopoulos, 2016; Cabot, 2019), "the professional vocabulary", such as "beneficiaries" (Rozakou, 2016b), "guest-host" relations (Raimondi, 2019) and clientelism (Cantat, 2018), arguing that charity and humanitarianism lead to the de-politicization of the issue (Cantan, 2018; Karaliotas & Kapsali, 2020). In line with that, Dadusc & Mudu (2020) argue that solidarity aims at creating alliances and coalitions with an understanding that fighting against the border regimes is a common struggle of citizens and non-citizens. Solidararians tend to present themselves as supporters of egalitarian principles and bridging the social hierarchies between givers and receivers (Cabot, 2019) as well as producing new political subjectivities based on mutual respect, self-management, and autonomy. On the other hand, the co-existence does not remain untouched by difficulties and dilemmas (Karaliotas & Kapsali, 2020). As Cabot (2019) and Zaman (2019) argue, possibly in the name of solidarity, new forms of exclusion can be produced in an attempt to erase the difference, considering that the Solidarity Movement in Greece and the intentions of individuals involved are highly diverse.

2.3.3 Being (un) deserving

Monforte et al. (2019) argue that consolidation of performance-based deservingness creates a space in which movers not only try to perform strategically what they consider is expected from them by state officials but also outside of state interactions. According to Blachnicka-Ciacek, Trąbka, Budginaite-Mackine, Parutis & Pustulka (2021), that creates a situation in which movers constantly feel obliged to prove their deservingness to avoid the risk of being regarded as "undeserving". In line with many authors (van Meeteren & Sur, 2020; Monforte et al., 2019; Wernesjö, 2020), I argue that this normalization of adopting a specific performativity to be accepted in the "community of value" (Marchetti, 2020) can exacerbate the lines of distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" individuals as well as make movers adopt the "Us and Them" logic (Monforte et al. (2019; Ratzmann & Sahraoui, 2021) to differentiate themselves from "inappropriate attitudes".

The injunction to performance-based deservingness has made many movers internalize the obligation to prove their "goodwill", law-abiding nature and moral duty to obey the law of the host country, payment of taxes and financial independence, respect, and credibility (Osipovic, 2015; Monforte et al., 2019). Similarly, Wernesjö (2020), in her study concerning the deservingness of unaccompanied minors in Sweden, argues that the minors tried to position themselves as grateful, responsible, and active citizens concerning their responsabilization related

to the welfare state and integration. Such practices in a broader understanding of citizenship beyond dichotomous terms can be considered as movers' efforts to make themselves "less illegal". Chauvin and Garcés-Mascreñas (2012) use the term "moral economy of illegality" to describe how people on the move are constructed as more or less illegal based on the ethics of contemporary states related to economic and civic values (p.247). Blachnicka-Ciack et al. (2021) argue that different types of movers recognize they are not considered as "fully-fledged citizens", so to "self-legitimize" themselves, they sometimes adopt an anti-immigrant language by criticizing those who "don't want to integrate" (Monforte et al., 2019).

To sum up, following the deservingness frame strategically shows that movers are aware of the exclusionary governmental techniques, but simultaneously as active agents, they can reproduce the *pensee d'Etat* (Monforte et al., 2019, p. 40). In combination with that, the moral claims of deservingness and the ambiguity of state policies and social structures deployed to prevent movers' formal inclusion illustrate the limitations of traditional understandings of citizenship (van Meeteren & Sur, 2020). Nevertheless, we should not underestimate that (un) deservingness is not fixed but is vague, fluid, and characterized by artificiality (Blachnicka-Ciack et al., 2021). Although states cannot entirely predict the extensiveness of their definitions and are afraid of movers that can become "too integrated" through their networks, cultural and economic inclusion, the vagueness and plasticity of the ideal performance is used to limit movers' deservingness.

2.4 Conceptual framework

Figure 1 is a schematic representation of the main pillars of this study. Legal precarity is a condition that characterizes the navigation of movers in Greece. In the state of precarity, movers, through their navigational tactics, have multiple encounters with state and non-state actors, which produce the construction of deservingness. Among them are actors occupied in the humanitarian sector and actors involved in solidarity. The notions of hotspot approach and geosocial solidarity represent the spaces in which the practices of humanitarianism and solidarity unfold, respectively. In those spaces, diverse understandings of deservingness are created and finally contribute to movers' experience of deservingness.

From my perspective, it is essential to consider that all of the aforementioned concepts are not fixed but rather fluid and mutually influence each other. For instance, nevertheless, geosocial solidarity and solidarity practices are initiated in response to border violence, hotspot approach, the humanitarian understanding of "bear life", and pose a challenge to the border regime, are reshaped and influenced by practices of disciplining and hostile policies. Therefore, concerning deservingness, solidarity practices can challenge or/ and can reproduce socialities not always dissimilar to the formal hospitality frameworks (Cabot, 2019). Similarly, the hotspot approach and humanitarian practices are contested by the involvement of solidarity initiatives in

care and the occupation of former activists in the humanitarian field (Pendakis, 2019). That action-reaction process can influence the understanding of performance-based deservingness. Furthermore, concerning movers' experience of deservingness, it is significant to consider that they are influenced by the staircase models created. Nevertheless, they can destabilize the understandings of deservingness, as will be discussed in chapter 6, due to their navigational tactics, decision-making, and the semi-legal reality in Greece, which "encourages" maneuvering.

Construction of deservingness is a dynamic concept, dependent on the context and constantly under negotiation and sometimes, with some elements of luck, as the following chapters confirm.

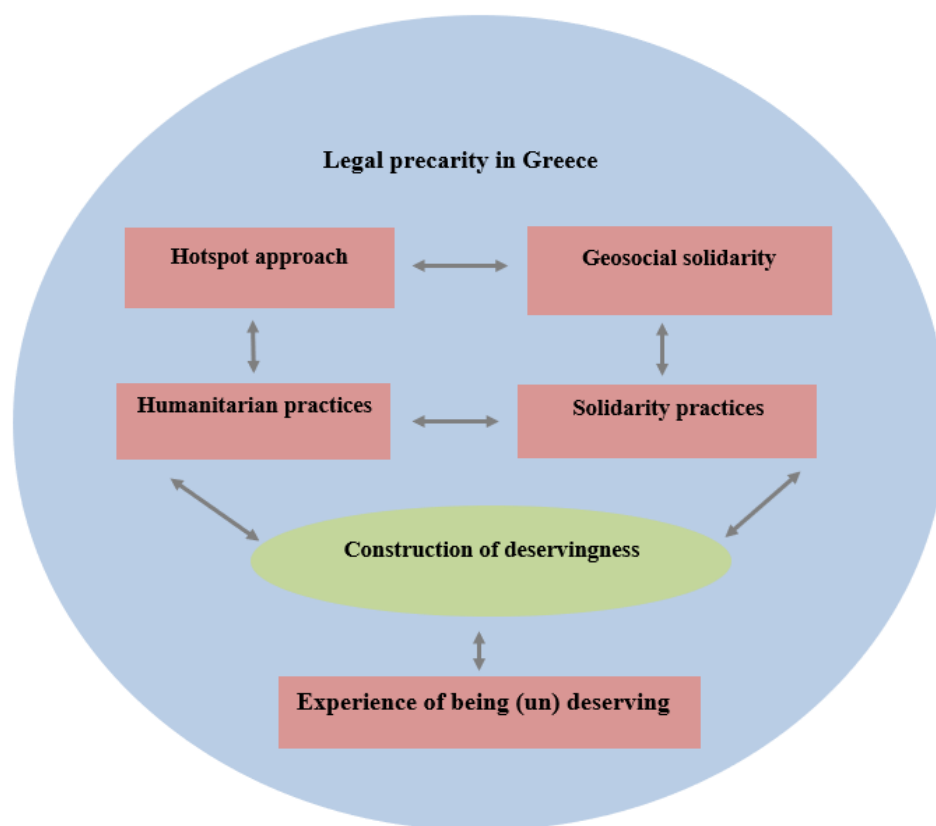


Figure 1: "Constructing deservingness-circle"

Chapter 3 | Methodology

This study is about individuals' feelings, beliefs, patterns, and attitudes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Naderifar, Goli, Ghaljaie, 2016). For this reason, the use of qualitative ethnographic methods was chosen. Specifically, I followed single-sited ethnography (Gielis, 2011) as my fieldwork took place exclusively in Athens, Greece. My goal was to study the multi-sited context, the transnational processes related to the construction of deservingness for people experiencing legal precarity in a specific place (Gielis, 2011; Marcus, 1995). For this research, the methodological lens of place perspective was used. Place perspective¹ suited well because this study examines how the different mobilities and interrelations in a place become connected and create networks or cause clashes. The articulation of deservingness through humanitarian and solidarity practices, but also those practices themselves are a product of social ties, networks, relations existing in a specific place, in that case, in Greece. Both of them reflect the global-local dynamics as humanitarian and solidarity practices are influenced by the policy on the national and EU level.

The following sections discuss how relational and auto-ethnography were useful tools in investigating and interpreting deservingness in the existing system of relations. Additionally, I present how through snowball-sampling, semi-structured and informal conversations combined with participant observations helped me to conduct my study. In the last section, I reflect on my fieldwork experience related to the interaction with my interlocutors, obstacles that I encountered, and limitations of this study.

3.1 Relational ethnography

According to Yeo & Dopson (2018), in relational ethnography, the researcher considers processes and spaces as the object of analysis, rather than groups and places (p.2). In line with that, Desmond (2014) argues that relational ethnography gives ontological primacy to the configurations of relations instead of groups and places. That makes relational ethnography involve degrees of collaboration, co-creation (Simon, 2012), and webs of mutual influence, which by extension produce chains of connection and interdependence (Desmond, 2014, p. 554).

As aforementioned, this research intends to study the relations, synergies, attitudes, perceptions, and emotions that arise through the construction of deservingness for people on the move. Through relational ethnography, exploring closely the different interactions of people on the move, with solidararians, professional humanitarians,

¹ Lecture by J. Schapendonk (11-11-2020). International Migration, Globalization and Development. Researching migration, mobility, and transnationalism: a workshop

volunteers, bureaucrats, governmental institutions confirms the dynamic nature of these relations and the fact that the social world is constantly re-made and re-described (Yeo & Dopson, 2018; McGee, 2020). In this study, the diverse interactions taking place in social spaces where governmental, humanitarian, and solidarity practices, formally and informally unfold, are regarded as “relational spaces” (Desmond, 2014). That relational praxis is helpful in interpreting and problematizing indications of inequality in deservingness, practices of categorizing (McGee, 2020), and diverse understandings around it. That enabled me to give a multi-voiced perspective in my study (Yeo & Dopson, 2018). Beyond that, relational ethnography extends the idea of reflexivity beyond the individual experience and positions it in a relational context (Simon, 2012, p.12). According to Simon (2012), relational reflexivity “invites” an increased sensitivity and encourages the researcher to consider the needs of people involved and affected by the study (p.12). That relational reflexivity and following the research ethics were particularly important for my research, as, through that, I could gain a deeper understanding of the relational structures and others’ experiences (Yeo & Dopson, 2018).

Examining the “relational mechanisms” behind collaborations, alliances, conflicts made my fieldwork a relational process, too, as the diverse interactions demanded constant reflexivity to construct the sociological explanations (McGee, 2020) of this study. Although relational ethnography has its own set of limitations, it gives us the potential to transcend the limitations of place and group-based fieldwork (Desmond, 2014, p.574). That enables us to understand how social actors exist in a state of mutual dependence and struggle (Desmond, 2014, p.574).

3.2 Auto-ethnography

Denshire (2014) argues that auto-ethnography creates a space of interaction between the individual (auto-) and the collective (-ethno-), where the writing (-graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed (p.4). Similarly, Stahlke-Wall (2016) claims that auto-ethnography produces highly personalized accounts that are based on the researcher’s experience to extend sociological knowledge (p.39). According to Niemeijer & Visse (2016), auto-ethnography as an approach involves autobiography, self-observation, reflexivity in the context of ethnographic research, thereby connecting the personal to the public (p.169).

In this study, my intention, apart from examining the relations as aforementioned, is to find my position in the process. Through auto-ethnography, I follow the self-narrative form to place myself within the specific social context (Butz & Besio, 2009) and re-examine my self-understandings concerning the construction of deservingness through the asylum procedure, humanitarian and solidarity practices in the Greek context. As the following chapters show, I explore my own emotional experiences to the topic of my research and how I interact with my participants’ feelings and

accounts. Based on that, according to Butz & Besio (2009), I act both as an agent and an object of signification. Following auto-ethnography helps me understand the inevitably subjective nature of knowledge and develop critical reflexivity and sensibility on my thoughts both as a researcher and individual (Butz & Besio, 2009).

Additionally, auto-ethnography becomes an essential tool in comprehending geographies of emotion and spatial processes as well as the embodied experience of places and practices in my informants' accounts (Butz & Besio, 2009). In conjunction with that, auto-ethnography also enables me to self-reflect and realize how I am influenced by my informants' interpretations as a researcher. That makes auto-ethnography a learning process of self-understanding (Niemeijer & Visse, 2016).

Auto-ethnography emerged due to "the calls" to pay greater attention to how the ethnographer interacts with the researched (Méndez, 2013). Although auto-ethnography runs the risk of being considered self-indulgent, narcissistic, and individualized (Méndez, 2013; Stahlke-Wall, 2016), from my perspective, combining it with relational ethnography, as aforementioned, can re-create researcher's experience in a reflexive manner, in which the researcher understands the researched as reflexive subjects whose accounts and identities are entangled with their own (Butz & Besio, 2009).

3.3 Methodological choices

3.3.1 Participant observation

According to Kemp (2001), participant observation aims to identify "what it is that is going on here" by watching what is happening with as open a mind as is possible (p. 528). Participant observation requires spending time being present, living, or working with other people and communities to comprehend them (Laurier, 2010, p.116). Therefore, through participant observation, the researcher intends to gain the authority of "insider" knowledge (Laurier, 2010, p. 1). Sperschneider & Bagger (2003) argue that the participant-observer operates simultaneously as an insider and outsider, who has to go beyond the ordinary engagement of a common participant and try to observe the activities, people, and the physical aspects of the context under research (p.42).

Most of the observations included in this study stem from my participation at the international grassroots initiative "Khora Community Center", located in the city center of Athens, Greece. My role as a participant and observer at Khora enabled me to "immerse" myself in that specific setting and gather valuable empirical insights into social practices and experiences related to the construction of deservingness that normally remain "hidden" from the public gaze (Reeves, Kuper & Hodges, 2008). Making those observations helped me see the interactions of people on the move with

international volunteers. Additionally, being there as a participant and observer enabled me to gain a more profound understanding of how movers encounter legal precarity and the everyday struggles, what kind of tactics they deploy to navigate themselves in the Athenian space, how they perceive their deservingness in the Greek context and what means to them to be involved in a grassroots initiative, like Khora. Combined with that, I had the opportunity through Khora to accompany people at public services, such as the Greek Asylum Services, and gain a first-hand experience of the bureaucratic obstacles, injustices, and irrationalities that movers encounter. About observing, as aforementioned in the previous section concerning interviewing, the process is not identical per individual. For example, with people with whom I spent more time, it was easier to observe their practices than others with whom I met them for once, or despite meeting quite often, they were generally warier of expressing themselves.

From my perspective, although observation combined with participation possibly involves a risk of degrading the quality of data, it is important to realize the power of participant observation lies in the intimacy of the researcher with the researched, the places, and practices (Laurier, 2008, p.3). Therefore, participant observation should not be perceived as “subjective” or “objective”, but it should be understood as a method that develops intersubjective understandings between the researcher and the researched (Crang & Cook, 2007, p.22).

3.3.2 Semi-structured& informal interviews

Interviews and conversations were an important source for data collection. In my interview guides, I included closed questions, such as “How much time have you spent in Greece?” and open-ended, for instance, “Which has been your experience with participating at Khora?” That helped me to define the areas that I aimed to explore but also allowed me and my informants to diverge from a “yes-no” answer (Longhurst, 2010) and to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008, p. 291). At the beginning of the “interview”, before asking questions concerning deservingness, the opinions/ experiences of the asylum procedure, humanitarian and solidarity practices, I intended to ask unstructured questions less-related to my research, such as “Do you have any siblings?”, “Is your family back home/ abroad?”, “In which neighborhood do you live?” or “Since when do you join Khora?” to create a friendly, informal, and open atmosphere (Crang & Cook, 2007). Afterward, since my goal was to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and motivations of diverse actors on the issue of deservingness, I asked more open-ended questions. That openness in the questions gave a more personal character in the interview, which was also my goal; to bring the diverse understandings of deservingness from individuals’ point of view (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

From my perspective, the use of semi-structured and informal interviews helped me to transcend the role of the “detached scientific observer” who aims only to extract “unbiased data” (Crang & Cook, 2007). That made me able to participate on a much more equal basis in the discussions with my interlocutors. For example, quite often, I shared personal experiences, struggles, and opinions with my informants to make the atmosphere less formal as possible. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that despite my intention to make the conversations as such, sometimes the “power inequalities” played out. I will elaborate on that further in section 3.5.

Additionally, semi-structured and informal discussions enabled me to stay flexible. I had conversations with people coming from completely different backgrounds and are involved differently in the Greek migration scene, such as bureaucrats, professional humanitarians, NGO employees, members of the grassroots initiative “Khora”, people on the move, lawyers, researchers. Although I had already prepared different interview guides based on the background of the person that I was addressed to, I was used to changing or re-formulating, including or excluding questions, as I felt that sometimes certain questions could be answered without any hesitation, while in a different context the same question could be a cause of embarrassment.

To gain a deeper understanding of the construction of deservingness by multiple actors and the diverse experiences around it requires extensive investigating of complex attitudes, emotions, and perceptions. For collecting and interpreting this diversity of experience, semi-structured and informal conversations are valuable tools, not for offering to the researcher a route to “the truth”, which from my perspective, in issues as such is very variable, but for offering an important route to insights into what people do and think (Longhurst, 2010, p.112).

3.4 Implementation

3.4.1 Research setting and population – about the where, who and how

Where – Location of the fieldwork

As aforementioned, most of my empirical insights resulted from my fieldwork at the site of “Khora Community Center”. Khora is based on non-hierarchical ideals, and decision-making is done through General Assemblies to make it as inclusive as possible. Among its values are free movement, dignity, and autonomy for all. I spent roughly four months (May 2021- August 2021) volunteering daily at the Khora Kitchen and the Khora Asylum Support Team (KAST). Combined with my participation at Khora, I intended to contact other state and non-state actors, such as local and international NGOs, and “mobilize” some personal contacts that could bring valuable insights into my research or connect me with their network.

Concerning Khora, during my first month, I did not take any interviews, as I tried to be adapted in the specific setting as well as I did not want to give the impression that I participate in the community only for doing my research. That allowed me to reconsider interview questions, self-reflect more on language and ethical issues. At Khora Kitchen, I had the opportunity to meet most of the people on the move who participated in my study. From my perspective, the more relaxing and friendlier environment at the Khora Kitchen enabled that to happen compared to my participation at KAST, where the atmosphere is more serious due to the interaction with the bureaucratic dystopia. Although my volunteering at KAST was a very significant experience in gaining a deeper knowledge of the asylum procedure in Greece, the obstacles and arbitrariness that movers encounter, I felt from the early beginning that attempting to take interviews from movers who are addressed to KAST for support is highly unethical. Therefore, from the KAST environment, I had conversations only with volunteers and interpreters.

Most of my interviews were conducted at cafes in the area of Kypseli, Athens where Khora is located. 16 out of 32 interviews were conducted face-to-face in Athens. One of the face-to-face interviews was conducted in Heraklion, Crete, Greece. The rest took place online because some of my informants have moved abroad or were used to working in the Greek islands, or it was more convenient for them to have an online meeting instead of meeting in person. Additionally, one of them preferred to write down his answers instead of having an online meeting.

The location of my fieldwork, Athens, was particularly significant for my research. In Athens, I saw the practical implementation of politics of exhaustion with my own eyes when I accompanied people to the Greek Asylum Services. Long queues, outrageous delays, postponements compose the scene of precarity. Additionally, it is important to consider the influence of the EU-Turkey Deal on the movers and how accessing Athens, and generally, the Greek mainland, is deployed as a mechanism to divide the deserving from the undeserving (Papada, 2021). Furthermore, as I study the construction of deservingness through humanitarian and solidarity practices, doing research in Athens is very meaningful as, since 2016, many squats and solidarity initiatives have been involved in border-crossers' support (Oikonomakis, 2018), as well as a variety of local and international organizations, are based in Athens. Nevertheless, since 2016, the actively hostile governmental policies have created a diverse scene for movers' support, which deserves further investigation.

Who- Introduction to my interlocutors

In total, I conducted 32 interviews with diverse actors involved in and influenced by the migration regime in Greece. As my goal was to study the construction of deservingness in the asylum procedure, humanitarian and solidarity practices, I interviewed bureaucrats (2), individuals working in the humanitarian sector, such as caretakers, lawyers, a psychologist and advocacy officers (11), international volunteers from Khora Community Center (6), journalists, scholars (2) and people on the move (11). In addition, concerning people on the move, I had conversations with people who were in Greece in the past but now have been relocated to Germany (1) and Luxembourg (1), others who are waiting for their decisions (4) are recognized refugees (4), are trying to access the asylum system (1) and decided to leave the country with their means (1). I decided to have conversations with that multitude of actors because I intended to examine how deservingness shifts across diverse perspectives and actors. Additionally, my goal was to study if the views of “outsiders” concerning precarity and deservingness show similarities with movers’ narratives.

As aforementioned, each category had a different interview guide. The interviews were recorded (22) and transcribed in Greek (13) or English (9) based on my interlocutors’ language preference. For the interviews in Greek, I summarized them in English. The rest of the conversations (10) were not recorded intentionally, as some of my informants felt uncomfortable with the recording, and in (2) interviews, I faced some technical issues. Most of the discussions that were not recorded were with people on the move. I decided deliberately to follow that strategy, as in my first “experimental interview”, my interlocutor told me that he would not continue the conversation if I wanted to record it. So, after that incident, I decided not to record conversations with movers.

Additionally, I intended to make my research as inclusive as possible. Therefore, I tried to tackle language obstacles. With the help of some friends, who translated for me my questions in Farsi and Arabic, I approached some people at Khora Kitchen that I was used to meeting quite often, in case they would like to write down their answers, or I suggested them having a conversation with the support of an individual who can translate. About that, I have to admit that this practice provoked a negative reaction by one of my respondents and made me reconsider the ethics of my research, as I will narrate in 3.5.

How - Snowball sampling

To collect my data, I used the non-probability method of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is very common in qualitative research as the goal is not to generalize findings but to understand a phenomenon (Naderifar et al., 2016). Therefore, as a method seems ideal for this study, as my goal is to examine the interpretations and experience of the construction of deservingness in movers' lives. Concerning the sample, special attention was paid to people on the move who arrived in Greece in the last decade as my research focuses on the changing reality in Greece since 2016 and the signing of the EU-Turkey Statement. Concerning state and non-state actors, I intended to approach people who are currently involved in humanitarian and solidarity practices or have been involved in the recent past.

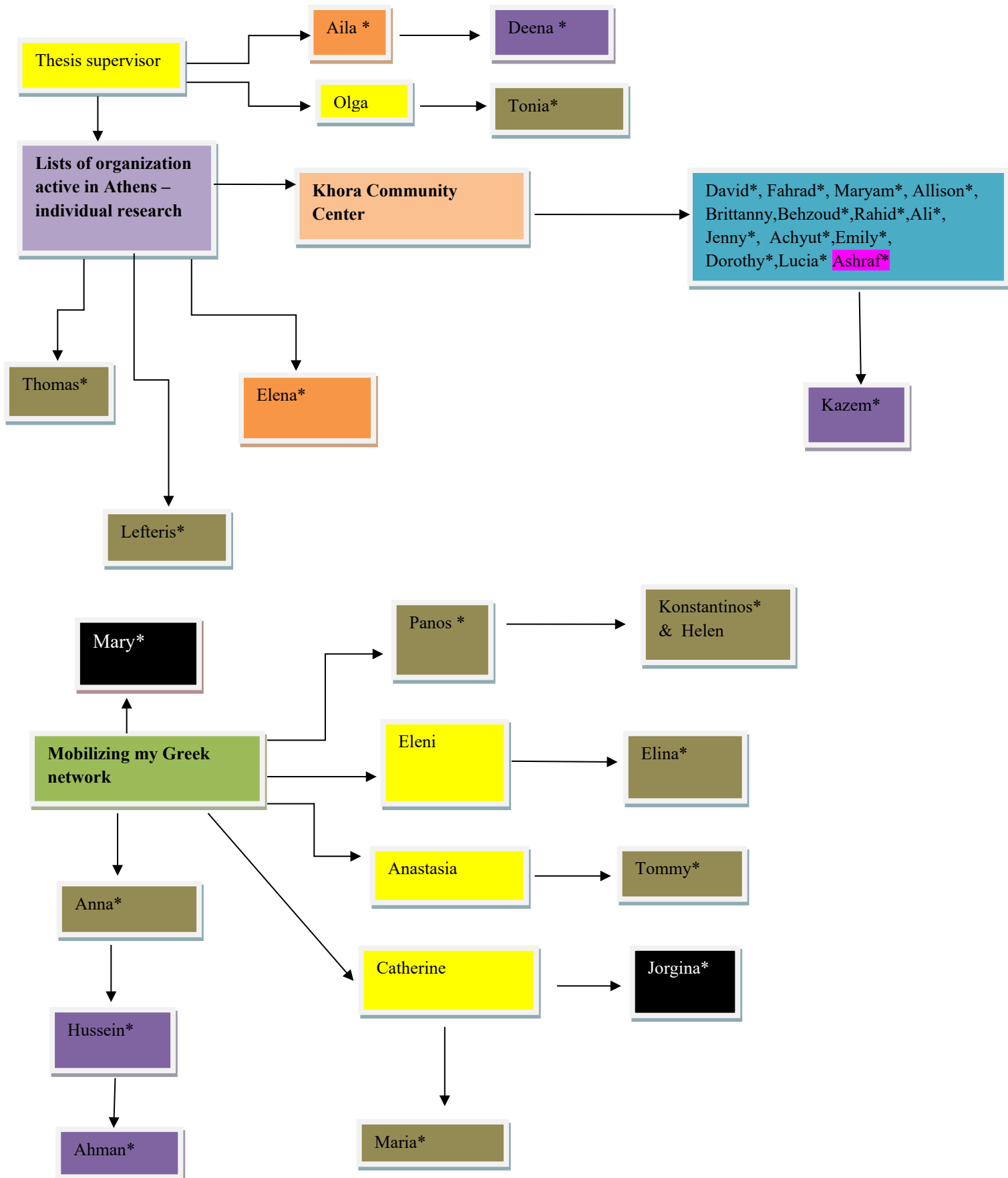
According to Waters (2015), creating “snowballs” can be a time-consuming and labor-intensive process, as it is dependent exclusively on the researcher's resources and contacts in the first instance (p.372). Johl & Reganathan (2010) argue that gaining access requires some combination of strategic planning, hard work, and luck (p.42). Therefore, I would argue that approaching my interlocutors through “snowballing” was time-consuming but relatively easy as my respondents were very willing to help and connect me with their network. Nevertheless, the process included some element of luck as contacts, in which I invested, did not respond in the end or contact me back when I had finished my research, while others that I did not have high expectations due to the circumstances were very useful for my “networking”. That enabled me to avoid the limitations of snowball sampling, such as the selective inclusion of individuals based on social networks (Browne, 2002; Cohen & Arielli, 2011), which automatically excludes other people. In figure 2, I illustrate how I created my network with the contact persons and my interlocutors through snowball sampling.

To conclude, mobilizing social networks as channels for recruitment can be an advantage (Browne, 2002, p.57). Snowball sampling was extremely valuable and necessary for my research. Although I tried to include diverse networks of people, multiple voices, and perspectives, I am fully aware of the possible exclusions that might occur. Speaking strictly about the advantages and disadvantages does not fully address the complexities of snowball sampling and creates artificial boundaries (Browne, 2002, p.57). This reaches an agreement with Sperschneider & Bagger (2003), who argue:

Fieldwork is a matter of techniques rather than a rigid step-by-step “how-to” prescription. The approaches to fieldwork are alternatives. They should be regarded as choices among strategies rather than selections of proper techniques to be adapted for any particular setting (p.42).

The Netherlands

Greece



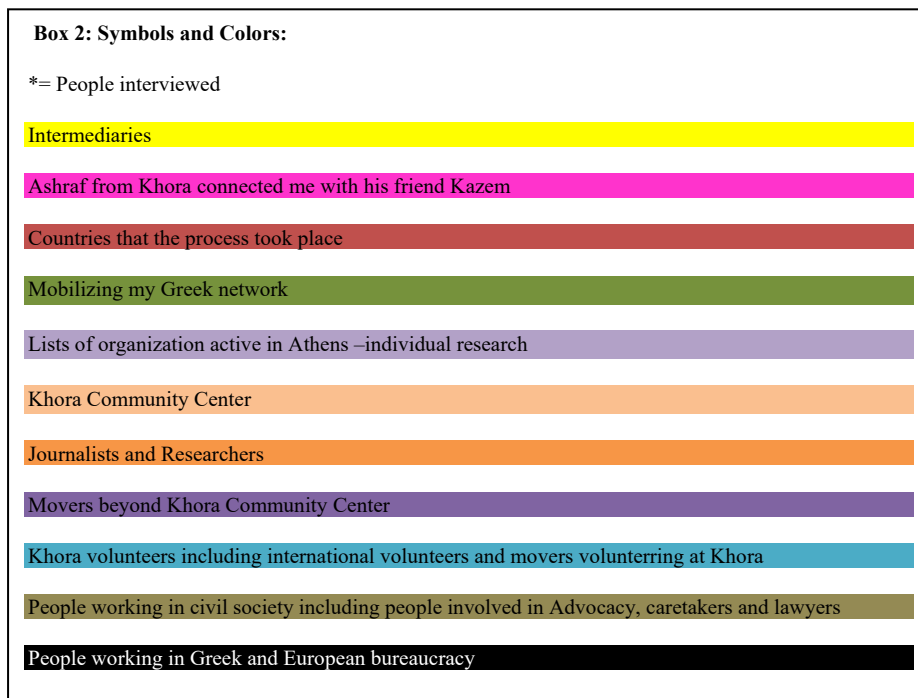


Figure 2: “Network through snowball sampling”. Author’s creation.

3.4.2 Data analysis

All recorded interviews have been transcribed with the online software “Transcribe” and coded with “Atlas. ti”. Likewise, the summaries of the unrecorded interviews were also coded with “Atlas. ti”. In the beginning, I used open coding and created more descriptive codes. Additionally, memos have been added to specific codes if a further explanation was needed. Afterward, I followed a more analytical coding, and I started to merge some codes that seemed similar. Furthermore, I tried not to abbreviate from the structure of my study, therefore, I sorted my codes into categories that match with the pillars of my research: “deservingness through the asylum procedure”, “deservingness through humanitarian practices”, “deservingness through solidarity practices” and “movers experience of being (un) deserving”. The process of coding and categorizing enabled me to get the core idea (Creswell & Poth, 2018) behind every interview and allowed me to compare the similarities and contradictions stemming from different experiences. Additionally, during my fieldwork, I was used to writing down my observations in my diary, which was useful for the process of the analysis.

3.4.3 Use and illustration of the data

In this study, collages of interview quotes combined with vignettes are utilized to facilitate the reader's understanding of complex processes regarding the notion of deservingness and how people make sense of their lives in the particular context. Specifically, creating collages of interview quotes with contradictory and consistent opinions enabled me to see how people position themselves within societal processes and gain a deeper understanding of their underlying assumptions, subjective perceptions, ambivalence, and dilemmas (Corden & Saibury, 2006). Furthermore, using quotes helped reveal my informants' opposing and comparable emotions and experiences (Eldh, Årestedt & Berterö, 2020). By extension, the collages of quotations were deployed to enhance my claims, as illustrating the experience and the evoked feelings strengthen, providing vividness and the elucidation of processes (Eldh et al., 2020).

Sampson & Johannessen (2020) consider that vignettes have the potential to act as “a stimulus to extend discussion” (p.59). Using vignettes in a multivocal way enabled me to explore my participants' understandings, attitudes, and motivations but also helped me to put myself into dialogue with them. As I intended to capture and describe their motivations, decision-making, and behaviors, vignettes facilitated connecting the personal self to the social context and enhanced my self-reflection to the process (Mizzi, 2010). The multivocality of vignettes helped me capture and illustrate the contradictory perceptions and understandings of other individuals as well as realize the contradictory “narrative voices” located within myself as a researcher (Mizzi, 2010, p.2).

In my research, the collage of interview quotes and vignettes triggered conversations with a reduced tendency for idealized answers (Sampson & Johannessen, 2020, p. 63). This absence of “fixed answers” allowed me to perceive the diversity in practices, perceptions, attitudes, and their shifting meanings per person and context, over time.

3.5 Methodological reflections

This study, as every study, comes with limitations, positive and negative unexpectedness, obstacles. Before diving into my empirical insights, from my perspective, it is important to self-reflect on the validity, reliability, and ethics of this research. According to Block et al. (2012), rigorous ethical reflexivity that recognizes the inherent risk of “symbolic violence” when conducting research addresses possible practical and ethical challenges and can produce more transparent and reliable research (p.84).

Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi & Cheraghi (2014) argue that the relationship and intimacy established between the researcher and the researched in qualitative studies can raise a range of different ethical concerns, and the researcher

faces dilemmas concerning privacy, honesty, and misinterpretation (p.3). Reflecting on my role as a researcher, I tried to follow the principle of “no harm” (Sanjari et al., 2014), but once unintentionally, my suggestion to have an interpreter in our conversation provoked the negative reaction of my interlocutor. Specifically, I proposed to him, if he did not feel comfortable speaking in English, a friend of mine and acquaintance of the informant could help us, but he told me that: “I want to speak with you and not with others, if you want to do things like that, the person should be a very close friend”. After that, I apologized for not thinking about it, and we had a conversation just the two of us.

Additionally, with another person, I felt the asymmetries in power between me as a researcher and him as a participant (Block et al., 2012). In our discussion, he told me multiple times how grateful he felt to me for including him in my research and to Greece for “accepting” him. After our conversation, I considered that possibly he was influenced by my nationality, as I am Greek, plus by the fact that our meeting took place in Greece. Wernesjö (2020) argues that the absence of critique and indication of thankfulness depict the unequal power positions produced by the relationship of movers with the “host” country. Similarly, Nayak (2017) argues that all research methodology practices, where ethics are concerned, must inhabit the uncomfortable question of where and how is the “violence” performed (p.11). From my side, implicitly, I tried to convince him that he should not feel grateful to me and Greece.

Furthermore, as aforementioned, I decided not to record some of the conversations that I had to avoid the negative influence that the recording could have on my informants (Gill et al., 2008). Undoubtedly, taking exclusively notes is challenging and comes with some omissions compared to the recording, but in my case, it was a wise decision not to record. I felt that my informants shared their stories and expressed their opinions without hesitating, which possibly had not happened if I had insisted on recording the interviews. To avoid misinterpretations, I asked for clarifications or confirmation for information that I had written down during the conversation or in the end.

Beyond small challenges, which are constitutive parts of the fieldwork process, interacting with my informants was not difficult. All of them seemed to be very open and willing to help me in every way they could. In the conversations, I always tried to create an informal and amicable atmosphere, which, I would like to think, made them feel comfortable. Sometimes, I have to admit that this amicable atmosphere distracted me from my core questions, but it was worth doing it.

After being on the field for four months, I realized that fieldwork is a “learning process” (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 26). Blommaert & Dong (2010) argue that: “We should not be surprised if the social events we observe are not linear, not perfectly logical, not clearly sequential [...] life is not like that (p.26). In that unstable setting, constant reflexivity, flexibility and sensitivity are essential tools for adapting ethically and minimizing the risks of the research. Achieving ethical practice and

methodological validity should be considered as mutually reinforcing objectives (Block et al., 2012).

Chapter 4 | Exploring Greek bureaucracy: Between legality and illegality

Fahrad's navigation in the Greek bureaucratic labyrinth

The first time that I met Fahrad was in May 2021, in Athens. Fahrad is a young, pleasant Afghan guy, also a Khora volunteer, who was used to helping us with Farsi translation at KAST. When I first met him, he had spent eight months in Greece, most of it in Athens. After some discussions with him, Fahrad told me that he had not managed to access the Greek asylum system yet. After many unsuccessful attempts through calling Skype², finally, in late July 2021, Fahrad managed to get his registration appointment. At that time, the lawyer who prepared him for his first interaction with the Greek Asylum Services advised him to show that he is under persecution in Afghanistan as a member of the Hazara minority, as well as that his life would also be in danger if he would be deported to Turkey based on the EU-Turkey Deal signed in 2016. So, to have hopes for getting international protection in Greece, he should show that he faces persecution in those two countries. Additionally, she advised him not to refer to his vast network of contacts in Greece and his qualifications; he speaks English fluently and has an undergraduate degree in Physics. He had to show the absence of any agency; he should just illustrate his desperation and victimhood. In opposition to the registration appointment, through which he received his white card and the status of the asylum seeker, for his first interview, he was advised to speak about his qualifications, diligence, and willingness to work and integrate.

Taking Fahrad's navigation as an example and all of the facts and personal information that he is advised to mention or to conceal, in this chapter, I intend to examine the ambiguity of Greek asylum bureaucracy to illustrate the semi-legality in bureaucratic practices. Beyond the discussion over legal standards and moral obligations, in line with Saltsman (2013), I argue that it is important to consider the transformation from law into practices. Taking the "dominant culture of disbelief" as a starting point, I argue that the Greek authorities, who determine movers' trajectories and deservingness importantly, embody diverse subjectivities, interests, emotions, and political, cultural relationships (Saltsman, 2013, p. 458) in their decision-making. Beyond the culture of disbelief, special attention is given to how nationality and

²The so-called 'Skype-procedure', was introduced in 2015 and remains the only option for persons in legal precarity on the Greek mainland to access the asylum procedure (Aradau, 2020). Possible claimants are required to call the Asylum Service at a particular time per week based on their nationality and language to communicate with an interpreter and pre-register their claim (Aradau, 2020). Later on, they are given an appointment for their registration as asylum seekers.

vulnerability are deployed as decisive deserving criteria concerning being granted asylum after the signing of the EU-Turkey Statement (Papada, 2021). Through that, my goal is to show how the hierarchies of deservingness based on criteria such as nationality and vulnerability lead to superficial understandings of the global flows and tremendous consequences on movers. Combined with that, I intend to illustrate how the consolidation of deserving criteria converts them into “bargain chips” to be eligible for asylum and support.

4.1 I don't believe you

The question of who gets to be considered as a refugee has never been easy to answer (Saltsman, 2013, p. 457). Although theoretically, international law pays considerable attention to refugee criteria, the nexus between law and practice has led to narrow and broader interpretations of it (Saltman, 2013). Being a “refugee” stemming from the 1951 Geneva Convention is equal to having a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political beliefs, membership of a particular social group (Herlihy, Gleeson & Turner, 2010, p.352). That concrete legal definition is constantly renegotiated and reshaped within the deeply political context of granting asylum, as well as the hierarchies of rights attached to it (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Smith & Waite, 2019). In Greece, being a person on the move involves a long-term formal and informal interaction with the so-called “documentation regime” (Tuckett, 2015). Experiences of the Greek migration law and bureaucracy are characterized by endless queues, long waiting times, and vague information (Tuckett, 2015). Through these practices, the Greek bureaucracy, instead of engendering transparency and consistency, creates uncertainty and indeterminacy and legitimizes arbitrariness (Cabot, 2012; Tuckett, 2015). Acting arbitrarily legalizes a culture of disbelief (Griffiths, 2012) concerning possible claimants' accounts. Furthermore, that interplay between state bureaucracy and illegality (Rozakou, 2017) shows how bureaucratic procedures are produced by self-interest, emotion, social networks, and stereotypes (Tuckett, 2015).

Through illustrating a collage of interview quotes from people with diverse backgrounds, this section aims to examine the contrasting understandings related to the legal text of the Geneva Convention and its differentiations between theory and practice in the Greek context. Through focusing on the intersection of formality and informality existing in the Greek bureaucracy (Rozakou, 2017; Tuckett, 2015), I intend to scrutinize how people on the move are divided into the “genuine refugees” with truthful claims and incredible “bogus” migrants (Smith & Waite, 2019). Equally significant is to comprehend the unequal power asymmetries between claimants and their caseworkers, as well as that the Greek authorities represent multiple subjectivities that indicate and personify a plethora of perceptions, social structures, and emotions (Saltsman, 2013).

“...The requests are always interpreted under Geneva Convention, and if someone has a fear of persecution based on those criteria can be recognized as a refugee, it is a Convention which I believe is fair, and if the applicant has the potential to prove one or more of these conditions will be recognized...”

(Mary, asylum caseworker)

“...I am not sure if in the procedure all of the rules and conditions stemming from the definition are followed...when people want to apply for asylum...try to make a story, an ideal scenario to respond to the conditions. I am not saying that people are lying, but their telling should be something livable and strong in a way that the handlers of the interview could not cast doubts on it...So, you have also to be capable of proving things, which sometimes it's very difficult as many people don't have the proofs why they are in danger...”

(Elena, Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology & editor/reporter for Greek independent medium)

“...I think that everyone goes into the system, with the government already having or the asylum service already having the assumption that they don't fit these criteria. So, it's almost like a person who's trying to work backward, instead of trying to prove the fact that they've been a victim of persecution or discrimination in their home country ... they're trying to prove against that fact that... I don't know how to word this, but like, this idea of like, innocent until proven guilty is almost it's like the opposite... in Greece, it feels like the person is guilty until they're proven that they're innocent...”

(Dorothy, Khora member)

“...Refugees are forced to lie, they have to lie to persuade asylum servants for their right to asylum... In the beginning, I tried to present everything, copies of documents and documents from the American company I worked for, a video that showed the attack against me, but I was rejected at first. Later, with the support of a lawyer, who told them... that it was the Taliban, I got a positive decision, I wanted to represent myself, but everyone needs a lawyer in the end...People should show that their lives are in danger, somehow are manipulated to make their reasons be accepted...”

(Ashraf, mover)

Those statements reflect the importance of credibility and imply chronic suspicion over claimants' accounts (Griffiths, 2012). Credibility is presented as the flagship for receiving a positive decision. Mary, an asylum caseworker, argues that possible applicants must satisfy the state authorities of their well-founded fear of being persecuted according to the Geneva Convention criteria. Therefore, being granted asylum requires a credible narrative account (Herlihy et al., 2010). Herlihy et al. (2010) argue that the credibility assessments have been the focus of criticism because judgments are open to subjectivity and trivialize extreme events, encouraging cynicism and lack of empathy (p. 352). In opposition to Mary's understanding, Elena,

a reporter, mentions that the claimants' obligation to prove things, recall dates, and events is not always easy, as many people could not bring the proofs with them. That paucity of evidence is crucial in assessing the "honesty" of the person, their stories, and determining their pathways. That institutional emphasis on truthfulness and detecting "frauds" comes along with the endemic image of people on the move as liars and opportunistic cheats (Griffiths, 2012). In line with that, Dorothy, due to her interaction with movers through Khora, argues that there is a constant suspicion over the claimant's accounts, so, for them, there is a constant struggle to prove their accounts while knowing a priori that they will be treated with distrust (Borelli, 2020). Ashraf, with his experience, confirms the culture of suspicion and simultaneously shows the moral character of the institutions, as legal support and the claims that he is a victim of the Taliban made him a more deserving claimant. Griffiths (2012) argues that sometimes people prefer to invent identifiers rather than risk producing discrepancies (p.10), so they adapt their narratives to decision-makers' requirements and expectations.

The accounts aforementioned illustrate that, although credibility is not mentioned as a criterion in the 1951 Refugee Convention (Dahlvik, 2017; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018), the suspicion of fraud plays a central role in asylum hearings (Saltsman, 2013) and asylum requests are often rejected due to inconsistencies in the claimant's account (Dahlvik, 2017; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). That constructing (in) credibility of applicants illustrates the fine lines between "official" and "real" rules (Tuckett, 2015), as well as legitimizes stereotypes and discriminatory approaches on migrants' eligibility based on nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, and class (Borelli, 2020), as Konstantinos and Helen confirm in the following quotes.

"..I have to say that there are many stereotypes and prejudices... Of course, the caseworkers give priority to people coming from warzones, and let's say that they have a more positive stance to the Syrian refugee, it is the same as in the past with the Palestinians..., they are influenced by their prejudices positively or negatively, for example, stereotypically female caseworkers grant asylum easier to female Afghans... or to unaccompanied minors... Or this guy is from Pakistan, so he is an economic migrant, so he does not deserve asylum, but on the other hand, from my experience in Katehaki, we have granted asylum to many Pakistanis who were Shia and faced persecution ... when I worked in Lesvos, the head of the office had told us, "Okay ..give international protection, but if you see an Iranian, the Iranian is lying", ...another important factor is the credibility of the applicant, so the caseworkers of Asylum Services and EASO due to their prejudices can make a person look unreliable... From my experience, there are many people who they do not know exactly the purpose of being persecuted..."

(Konstantinos, employee at an NGO, former asylum caseworker)

“...Sometimes the Asylum Services have a political character, colleagues have been fired, and others who have a very low percentage of giving positive decisions are appointed and move up ... I am not in contact with caseworkers, but I believe that from the results is clear ... e.g., if you are not Palestinian, Syrian, sometimes Afghan, female or facing mental problems, being LGBTQ+ they do not take you seriously..”
(Helen, psychologist at an NGO)

As a former asylum caseworker, Konstantinos shares that caseworkers are influenced by their personal experiences and stereotypes, therefore, impose their reading of the law. Similarly, an NGO psychologist, Helen, argues that the political discourse influences the Asylum Services in assessing claimants' accounts. Both of them underline the connection of prejudices with gender, nationality, age, and sexual orientation. Saltsman (2013) argues that in the heart of bureaucrats' work is their discretion (p.459). They have the power to decide who to include and exclude from access to services, whether or not to apply the law strictly or loosely (p.459). Individual and collective consolidated perceptions and stereotypes operate informally and have the power to exclude certain groups of applicants (Saltsman, 2013) and privilege others. Despite the sense of institutional rationality, bureaucrats can adopt an informal extralegal role beyond the enforcement of the law to maintain a general sense of order (Saltsman, 2013). During my fieldwork, I met people and heard stories that underline that culture of disbelief and the deep-rooted stereotypes in authorities' practices. For example, it is very common for unaccompanied minors from Bangladesh to carry their birth certificate with them, but the Greek authorities often cast doubts on certificates' validity. So, they document many of them arbitrarily as adults in the identification stage. That can be related to the Greek collective stereotypes concerning specific nationalities; Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are considered the less deserving and deportable (Spathopoulou & Carastathis, 2020).

Additionally, it is important to consider that Greece asylum caseworkers are a heterogeneous group in terms of backgrounds, opinions, and education level (Ioannidis, Dimou & Dadusc, 2021). When the Greek Asylum Services started to operate in 2013, due to the tight budget in hiring, the government at that time decided to staff the Services with permanent civil servants without prior working experience in public services and successful candidates of previous hiring procedures, not related to migration and asylum issues (Ioannidis et al., 2021). Despite the relevant training by experts, the lack of clear strategy (Borelli, 2021), normative values, beliefs, and the organizational structure are crucial for the interaction with the migrant “Other” (Borelli, 2020).

All of the accounts above illustrate that navigating the asylum structure is not only a strictly legal but also a social construct (Dahlvik, 2017). Understanding distrust and the hidden ideas of deservingness are crucial in realizing how those two are integrated into laws and daily practices (Borelli, 2020). Constructs of truth-tellers and liars based

on cultural assumptions, gender stereotypes, and political norms (Griffiths, 2012) depict the informal code of conduct within the official rules. Informal practices are a constitutive part of statecraft (Tuckett, 2015; Rozakou, 2017). Maintaining this informal system of conduct allows for decision-making to be made in an ad hoc and flexible way, which gives the authorities the latitude and power to interpret and apply the law as they see fit (Saltsman, 2013). Although mistrust and uncertainty are deployed as the technology of control, authorities' power should not be considered as non-negotiable.

The following subchapters will examine how nationality and vulnerability are utilized as deservingness criteria for people on the move in that semi-legal, (un) official space of bureaucratic practices. From my perspective, these factors are particularly significant in interpreting how authorities weave law into their idealized system of meanings and serve their metacode of conduct (Hoag, 2010).

4.2 Where are you from?

The signature of the EU-Turkey Statement in 2016, combined with the closure of the Western Balkan route and the introduction of the hotspot approach, changed the landscape for people on the move in Greece (Dimitriadi & Sarantaki, 2018). These changes became the “forerunner” for a different asylum procedure on the Greek islands and in the mainland (Dimitriadi & Sarantaki, 2018). According to many authors (Alpes, Tunaboylu & van Liempt, 2017; Dimitriadi & Sarantaki, 2018; Papoutsis, Painter, Papada & Vradis, 2019; Tazzioli, 2017; Sciurba, 2017; Papada, 2021), the EU-Turkey Deal and the relevant reformations encourage the discrimination on the grounds of nationality. Although discriminations based on nationality are not new, considering the prior existence of mechanisms such as safe country lists (Sigona, 2018, p.458), from my perspective is essential to scrutinize nationality as a criterion for deservingness in the practices of the Greek asylum bureaucracy. Understanding the strategic use of nationality by the asylum authorities through tools such as “safe third country”, “first country of asylum rules”, “safe country of origin” is significant in interpreting how the sovereign power disciplines mobile populations (Papada, 2021).

The goal of this section is to study how following a logic of prioritization according to nationality (Papada, 2021) contributes to the adoption of a “cookie-cutter approach” (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). Additionally, I aim to show how the concepts of “safe third country”, for Turkey, combined with the admissibility procedures and that of “safe country of origin”, are deployed to define deservingness and have led to an intensified recognition for certain nationalities while others are labeled as “tricksters” (Borelli, 2021).

“...[Asylum] gives the right to everyone to have an individualized assessment in their language to be capable of speaking in details about their allegations and request international protection from the Greek state...we have cases from countries where there is no warevery case should be examined in a personalized way, even in Albania there is the custom of vendetta which is a reason for claiming persecution...”
(Mary, asylum caseworker)

“...It is obvious that there is a profiling procedure based on nationality, it is easy to include someone in an informal list in which they are rejected...”
(Lefteris, advocacy officer of an NGO)

The non-individualized procedure possibly had benefited ...specific nationalities, for instance, that helped many people in 2015 to reach Europe..., but this case is the exception to the rule. Following a non-individualized assessment can be very harmful to the applicants, e.g., an LGBTQ person from Pakistan is and should be considered a refugee... if you do not examine the individual case in-depth, you will never really know the needs and reasons of the applicant...”
(Elina, advocacy officer of an NGO)

“...I think that there are divisions within the asylum procedure and now with the Third Safe Countries, many nationalities with low success rate, are not examined if they have a fear of persecution in their country, but if they could live in Turkey, there are many divisions...”
(Jenny, Khora member)

“...I mean, for sure there's violation, I suppose the best example at the moment is this distinction between admissibility interviews and merit interviews...some people don't even get the chance to express to the asylum office how they would fit into that category of persecuted group, because the asylum office hasn't given them [the chance]... the admissibility interviews are not based on any of their personal information, the fact is mainly their nationality... the admissibility interviews don't take into account any of those categories [Geneva Convention]... because the only point of it is to try and understand whether someone's even allowed to do an asylum claim in Greece, no matter what the basis their asylum is. Also, just such a limiting definition for reasons why people need to try and create a life in somewhere other than their home country...”
(Brittany, Khora member)

They take a country, they divide it, and the city which is some km/h away from the warzone is safe for them to come back...so, it is easy for common people to believe that people who come especially from India, Pakistan and Africa are economic migrants, which possibly is not the case and here you can understand how the notion refugee is used and how restrictive the interpretation is...”
(Panos, caretaker at an NGO)

“...There’s a focus on nationality during the asylum procedure. I was rejected not in person but through the phone. I was rejected based on my nationality...My friends from Bangladesh are rejected based on nationality”, NGOs do not prepare people [Bangladeshi] even if you’re in danger...”
(Achyut, mover)

As advocacy officer of an NGO, Lefteris introduces the idea that nationality is utilized as a discriminatory element in the asylum procedure, which leads to the a priori rejection of particular claimants. Elina, who comes from a similar background, argues that focusing on nationality has consolidated the asylum procedure's non-individualized character, which has crucial consequences in movers' pathways and restricts our understanding of being a refugee (Kyriakidou, 2020). Their statements oppose Mary's account, who claims that decision-making concerning asylum requests is based on an individualized assessment regardless of nationality criteria.

Due to their involvement in the grassroots initiative of Khora and their encounters with movers there, Jenny and Brittany refer to the unequal treatment that movers experience due to the signing of the EU-Turkey Deal. The EU-Turkey Deal, since 2016, allows Greece to return possible asylum applicants to Turkey (Ghezelbash & Feith Tan, 2020) based on the “third safe country”. Despite the controversial safety for asylum seekers in Turkey (Alpes et al., 2017; Dimitriadi, 2016; Ghezelbash & Feith Tan, 2020), the so-called admissibility procedures were set into action and became the main legal pathways to examine whether the assessment of asylum requests is the responsibility of Greece or Turkey (Papada, 2021; Papoutsis et al., 2019). The objective behind this practice is not to determine whether the individual is eligible to be granted asylum in Greece or not but to assess if Turkey is a safe third country for the claimant to return (Tunaboylu & Van Liempt, 2019; Tazzioli, 2017). In 2016, the admissibility procedures concerned only Syrians. Throughout the years, they have been extended to other nationalities with high recognition rates (Papada, 2021). Alpes et al. (2017) argue that applications from individuals with low recognition rates are subjected to the eligibility procedures as the success chances are low. In the last Joint Ministerial Decision on the 7th of June 2021, the Greek state designates Turkey as a third-safe country for asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Somalia, in addition to Syrian (UNHCR, 2021). Beyond the discriminatory nature of admissibility procedures, it is important to consider the dysfunctional aspects of it. Turkey does not accept any person back, especially since the beginning of the pandemic. That puts people on the move in constant limbo as they are deprived of their right to make an asylum claim but also, they do not have the right to move.

In a similar way to “third safe country”, “safe country of origin” can be considered as a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion based on nationality-based categories (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). The concept has controversial meaning for the EU as

due to the 1951 Refugee Convention, individuals should be treated without discrimination based on the country of origin, but the Asylum Procedure Directives have allowed EU states to divide asylum seekers into different categories with more and less favorable treatment (AIDA, 2015). According to AIDA (2015), the ambiguous impact of these procedures on the claimants and the constant discrepancies in the designation of “safe countries” among member-states raise critical questions in signaling a country as such (p.2). For example, as Panos mentions, the “safe” region can be some km/h away from the warzone. The assumption of democracy, absence of persecution, no fear of torture, and the threat of violence (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018) is not always the case and seems to ignore the individual experience. For instance, although nationals can enjoy state protection, certain minorities and groups can be ill-treated due to ethnic, religious, sexual characteristics (AIDA, 2015). In line with that, Achyut, based on his experience, argues that coming from Bangladesh was the reason for receiving two rejections. In our discussion, he underlined that his life there was in real danger. Similarly, during my fieldwork, I met many people, even minors, who fled Bangladesh due to the fear of being killed due to vendettas, family disputes, corruption, and insecurity in their cities and villages. Despite those circumstances, the Greek state recognized in January 2021 Bangladesh as a “safe country of origin”.³

Those tactics depict that the Greek authorities prioritize rejections and returns over granting asylum (Alpes et al., 2017), while claims are treated as a matter of administrative management (Papada, 2021). Most of the statements above confirm that despite the spirit of the Geneva Convention, where the emphasis is on the refugee as an individual (Sigona, 2018, p.457), a “cookie-cutter approach” is followed (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). That racialized partitioning between people “in genuine need” and those obstructed to claim asylum (Dimitriadi & Sarantaki, 2018; Sciurba, 2017; Tazzioli, 2017) over-simplifies and homogenizes the individual experience (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018, p.51). That selective misunderstanding of the complexity of global conflicts and structural violence disorients and reproduces the typical stereotypes. It also depicts how deservingness is connected to the legal language of nationality and international politics (Kyriakidou, 2020).

³Hellenic Republic Ministry of Affairs, 25/1/2021, Joint decision of Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs Miltiadis Varvitsiotis and Migration and Asylum Minister Notis Mitarachi on updating of the list of safe countries of origin – Inclusion of Bangladesh and Pakistan, retrieved from: <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/statements-speeches/joint-decision-of-alternate-minister-of-foreign-affairs-miltiadis-varvitsiotis-and-migration-and-asylum-minister-notis-mitarachi-on-updating-of-the-list-of-safe-countries-of-origin-inclusion-of-bangladesh-and-pakistan.html>

Refugees versus Economic migrants: A red herring

Nationality, as aforementioned, is a decisive factor in considering a person “genuine refugee” or economic migrant. That arbitrary division seems to ignore the non-linearity of migration processes, the importance of decision-making, border-crossings, and social networks (Schapendonk et al., 2020). Those categorizations stem from sedentarist understandings of migration and serve the nation-state agendas (Schapendonk et al., 2020; Dahinden, 2016), which profoundly affect movers and their trajectories. In the Greek context, economic migrants are depicted as people for whom migration is a choice and have a low level of need, while the refugees are constructed as needy persons with a lack of control over their lives (Nielsen, Frederiksen & Larsen, 2019). Those state-centered categories convert people on the move into administrative objects and fail to capture the multiplicities of human identity, as well as the fact that they are active agents (Dahinden et al., 2021).

“...It is common, off-the-record two colleagues to discuss and say that this person will not get asylum...Many of them claim that they left due to unemployment which makes you automatically a migrant...”
(Jorgina, former employee at EASO, IOM)

“...I have spoken with people who left Afghanistan, they were used to tell us..we moved at first to Iran and later to Greece, there [Iran], there is no “war”, but we were deprived of our rights, because Afghans in Iran face a lot of racism, for example possibly they did not have the right to study at the University, many people left for a better future, so if someone leaves a country for a better future worth less than a person who flees due to war?”
(Anna, former employee at an NGO)

“...Sometimes you talk to Pakistani, Bangladeshi clients who are economic migrants probably. I have been told about the shame they would feel if they went home and the expectations that are riding on them as a young man who comes to Greece to try to send some money home, and this is someone who absolutely would kind of fit into the bucket of the economic migrants, but they will tell you sort of... they absolutely cannot go home because... their family will be so disappointed in them...”
(Emily, lawyer at an NGO & Khora member)

“..That’s important for people who handle the issue..as well as for the organizations who advocate their rights because very often you listen, “We’re all refugees”, it’s not exactly like that, and if the Bangladeshi says: “I didn’t come here for applying for asylum, but I came for a job”, you should take it into account, it’s the only way to create supportive structures for them..”
(Elena, Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology & editor/reporter for Greek independent medium)

Jorgina, having worked at European agencies and inter-governmental organizations, with her statement concerning the division between refugees and economic migrants, demonstrates how people through their accounts in their interviews are classified as desirable or non-desirable. That labeling, e.g., speaking about unemployment is equal to being classified as an economic migrant, produces specific political constraints (Dahinden et al., 2021). That stigmatization and criminalization of the figure of the economic migrant as the abuser of the asylum procedure (Sciurba, 2017) have contributed to the legitimization of a “divide and rule” principle (Dadusc & Mudu, 2020) through which the discrete categories of people on the move are governed.

Anna, having worked as an NGO employee in the past, with her quote, makes clear that those normative understandings of migration fail to consider the individualized experience and the multiple motivations of people on the move (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). These arbitrary divisions apart from the reproduced violations lead to the systematic exclusion of people who would see themselves as refugees (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018), according to the definition of “being a refugee” expressed in the Geneva Convention, due to the discrimination they face in a “safe” country, in that case, in Iran.

Due to her experience working as a lawyer and a Khora member, Emily introduces an additional factor in the multidimensionality of mobility and confirms the superficiality of the labeling practice. She refers to the moral obligations “at home” (Schapendonk et al., 2020). Schapendonk et al. (2020), in examining the trajectories of im/mobility of gold miners in West Africa, refer to “fabara” as the father’s place where the personhood is acknowledged and social recognition is granted (p.5). That can be detected in Emily’s statement. She refers to the expectations that families have from economic migrants and the feelings of disappointment in case of return to their home country. That particular example also depicts how the normative understandings systematically ignore the different mobility cultures.

The distinction between “refugees” and “economic migrants” does not reflect the multiple intersections of networks, aspirations, and the effects of mobility regimes (Schapendonk et al., 2020; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). In contrast, it builds on a more managerial approach to migration (Vradis et al., 2020) and functions as a technique to restrict access to asylum (Sciurba, 2017). Ignoring intentionally how different movements and cultures of mobility intersect and overlap contributes to generalizations, as Elena mentions, e.g., “We are all refugees” and legitimizes practices of categorizing and excluding people who do not “fit” to the ideal image. People should have the right to claim that they are not refugees. Considering all the different dimensions of migration and mobility, as well as the diversity in motives, is the only way to create, as Elena argues, structures of protection for movers.

4.3 Being vulnerable helps!

Prioritizing nationality in the Greek asylum procedure has constructed a hierarchy of deservingness based on the motivations for leaving the homeland (Kyriakidou, 2020). For this reason, the worthiness of moving and being granted asylum is highly dependent on particular understandings of vulnerability due to persecution and war, the absence of agency and choice (Kyriakidou, 2020; Chauvin & Mascareñas, 2014). According to many scholars (Papada, 2021; Spathopoulou et al., 2021; Neocleous & Kastrinou, 2016; Antonakaki et al., 2016; Vradis et al., 2020), Greek law is based on the concept of vulnerability concerning the asylum procedure. Under the EU-Turkey Statement, a separate procedural regime, the so-called “island restrictions”⁴ were established for people arriving on the Greek islands (Papada, 2021). Only people who are recognized as vulnerable have the right to move freely within Greece and escape the Greek hotspots (Tunaboylu & Van Liempt, 2019; Pallister-Wilkins, 2020; Antonakaki et al., 2016) as well as being exempt from the readmission procedures to Turkey (Papada, 2021; Spathopoulou et al., 2020).

This section aims to study how narratives of vulnerability are used by the Greek authorities to highlight the distinction between individuals who deserve protection and those who do not (Smith & Waite, 2019). Furthermore, I intend to show how being vulnerable is attached to a certain set of expectations concerning the “right behavior” of being a refugee (Casati, 2018, p. 801).

“...I think actually, the big thing that helps a lot is being considered vulnerable in a very obvious way. And that is a big problem for me with the Greek system is like the basic standard of service seems only sometimes to be provided. And not even that sometimes, but like, seems to be provided only to vulnerable people. And it's like, the basic standard of service should be provided to everybody. And then extra support should be provided to vulnerable people, you shouldn't have to be vulnerable to get, you know, your basic entitlements to be able to collect your ID,... like an older woman, a single mother, something like that seems to help quite a bit. Because I think people feel more of emotionally invested in those people than maybe like a single man with no obvious outward vulnerabilities...”
(Emily, lawyer at an NGO, Khora member)

“.. For single men is difficult to get asylum compared to single women or single parents... male single-parent have more opportunities compared to single men, we have also seen single men or women take in the journey a child who is an unaccompanied minor, and they pretend that they are the parent, cousin, brother and

⁴People on the move who arrived on the Greek islands after the implementation of the EU–Turkey Deal in 2016 are subjected to ‘geographical restrictions’. That means that they have to wait on the islands for their asylum application to be processed and cannot be transferred to the mainland (Tazzioli, 2017, p.10).

ask for their custody...”
(Jorgina, former employee at EASO, IOM)

“...They need to pretend, people should show vulnerability to get a house, healthy, young people don't have a house, they should show that they are sick, have psychological problems, it's very bad...”
(Maryam, mover)

During my fieldwork, I realized that deservingness in the asylum procedure is always interpreted under the vulnerability lens. Nationality, gender, family status, mental and physical condition are examined based on vulnerability. Emily mentions that performances of vulnerability are necessary for the claimants to receive basic standards of services. That conditionality in support produces a state of “vulnerabilising” and vulnerabilities that did not exist (Smith & Waite, 2019). Through that, vulnerability is converted into a form of currency (Spathopoulou et al., 2020) that allows some people to circumvent the existing law and negotiate their presence as well as their capacity to move (Tunaboylu & Van Liempt, 2019). In line with that, Jorgina argues that people on the move try to pretend to be a family or a single parent to be included in one of the vulnerable categories. Being pregnant, unaccompanied minor, single parent, a victim of torture, having disabilities (Pallister-Wilkins, 2020) makes a person automatically more deserving. The imposed racialized and gendered hierarchies of mobility possibly make it easier for women and children to negotiate their vulnerability compared to single males who are presented as threatening, non-vulnerable nameless bodies at borders and reception centers (Kyriakidou, 2020; Turner, 2021).

According to Brown (2014), vulnerability as a notion is deployed in the management and classification of individuals. Due to links to deservingness, how the vulnerability is interpreted has significant effects on those considered vulnerable (p.2). Maryam, through her experience, argues that people during the asylum procedure are forced to embody, expose vulnerabilities and show their desperation because they are assessed based on their victimhood (Smith & Waite, 2019; Ambrossini, 2015). Due to the politics of humanitarianism and the “requirement” of suffering (Tunaboylu & Van Liempt, 2019), narratives of vulnerability are constitutive parts of how the figure of being a refugee is perceived and how the refugee identity is constructed. Being desperately helpless and under threat “fulfills” the conditions of hospitality with legitimacy (Kyriakidou, 2020; Casati, 2018). Brown (2014) argues that vulnerability is connected to ideas that encourage certain acceptable behaviors (p.3). In her study, concerning the interpretations of young people’s vulnerability in the UK, her interviewees relate the more acceptable behavior, within a state of vulnerability, with compliance (p. 18). Specifically, they connect compliance with “engagement” and “motivation for change” (p.18). In line with that, Casati (2018), in her research about the image of “the deserving refugee” in a Sicilian town, confirms that gratitude,

obedience, and suffering are key elements in assessing migrants' merits (p.802). Some of my interlocutors argue the same.

“...We require a lot of humility, from anyone who's asking for international protection, we require a lot of work... In some sense, we require them not to be too proud, or just to be quite a sort of, we require them to be destitute and to prove how, how destitute they are...”
(Thomas, advocacy officer of an NGO)

“...I think the Greek government and the Greek asylum service have this idea that they're... I think they truly believe they're helping people. But they only want to help deserving refugees.. and to them, the people that deserve it are the people that thank them, and get on their hands and knees and tell them thank you for helping me and these the people that don't fight with them that are quiet, wait their turn, that, you know, like, are like gentle...”
(Dorothy, Khora member)

Thomas and Dorothy argue that “being grateful”, “being docile” are “behavioral requirements” in the Greek asylum procedure. That necessity to show gratitude and docility reflects the unequal power dynamics between the claimants and the authorities (Borelli, 2020) as well as implies that the support and hospitality offered should not be considered for granted (Wernesjö, 2020). Therefore, that set of expectations is conceptualized as an element of moral recognition (Casati, 2018) through which people try to prove themselves as “good”, hardworking (Borelli, 2020), and willing to self-improve (Monforte et al., 2019).

Categorizing people on the move based on vulnerability and the attached “behavioral set” reflects the logic of care and control ((Pallister-Wilkins, 2020) in the management of the migratory process. Using the “vulnerable”, “the grateful”, “the docile” as the marker of deservingness, beyond deepening the exclusionary, dividing practices, consolidates the representation of movers as passive, feminized, and infantilized victims without subjectivity and agency. That reduces and undermines the multiplicity of their identities (Tunaboğlu & Van Liempt, 2019; Smith & Waite, 2019; Spathopoulou et al., 2020; Chauvin & Mascareñas, 2014; O'Reilly, 2018). From my perspective, concerning the image of the deserving refugee as “vulnerable”, it is particularly significant to consider that although deservingness is highly based on expressing desperation, people should also demonstrate their capacity to become “good citizens” (Marchetti, 2020). Within neo-liberalism, the image of the “suffering traumatized victim” (Marchetti, 2020), despite the humanitarian reactions, is converted to a bogus economic burden if the person remains passive. So, combined with their vulnerability, they should show they do not passively accept their existence (O'Reilly, 2018).

4.4 Concluding remarks

With this chapter, I intended to answer my first sub-question: *“How, when, and by whom is deservingness enacted by the Greek asylum procedure for people experiencing legal precarity in Greece?”* My aim was to take into account different perspectives of people on the move, caseworkers, lawyers, NGO employees, and solidarians that together massage, form, and enact the eligibility in asylum in Greece. Many accounts revealed that the Greek asylum system is not objective, as one of my interlocutors fervently underlined, “it’s a very corrupted system, swayed by personal favors”. So far, I have discussed the dominant culture of disbelief and the deep-rooted individual, collective stereotypes in the practices of Greek authorities. Additionally, I studied nationality and vulnerability as the core deserving criteria in the procedure.

The hierarchies of deservingness as expressed through nationality and vulnerability criteria within the culture of disbelief are attached to the intended accelerated temporality of identification procedures and preventive exclusion from channels of asylum (Tazzioli, 2018, p.2). That focus on “speed” facilitates controlling and governing migration (Jacobsen, 2021) as well as intends to disrupt movers’ geographies and their autonomous temporalities (Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2021). Mechanisms such as “safe third country”, “safe country of origin” and “vulnerability criteria” represent the politics of exhaustion (Ansem de Vries & Welanders, 2021) in their institutionalized form and are deployed to keep people on the move away from accessing asylum.

Instead of focusing on institutional spaces of exhaustion, I intended to investigate the utilization of nationality and vulnerability as mechanisms of dividing and preventative illegalization of movers and their heterogeneous channels of mobility (Tazzioli & Garelli, 2020, p.1023), which encourages what De Genova (2020) refers to as “economy” of deportability; although all people on the move are potentially subject to deportation, not everyone is deported, so, there is an unequal distribution of power over movers’ lives and liberties (p. 157). That is also depicted in the various rationalities, mechanisms, technologies deployed in the management of migration (De Genova, 2020). For example, nationalities with high recognition rates have a different treatment compared to those with lower rates, or people recognized as vulnerable are treated differently from the non-vulnerable.

About the “mechanisms of management” especially based on nationality, it is particularly important to understand the aberration between theory and practice as well as the “paradoxes” of the Greek bureaucratic regime, which illustrate the intertwinement between legality and illegality (Cabot, 2012; Rozakou, 2017a). For instance, deportation notes are ordered for returns to countries that do not accept their nationals, such as Pakistan⁵ or to Turkey, which is not possible to take place. Those paradoxical bureaucratic procedures are the very means of statecraft (Rozakou,

⁵ Reuters, 15/11/2015, Pakistan suspends deal to accept deportations from Europe, retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-eu-idUSKCN0T70S220151118>

2017a; Aradau, 2020) and illustrate the capacity of the state to illegalize people stranded in Greece. That deliberate production of illegality for people on the move normalizes the sovereign logic of inclusion/ exclusion and gives space to further exploitations, such as being cheap precarious labor (Cantat, 2018).

Speaking about “paradoxes”, concerning the narratives of vulnerability, possible claimants should show their desperation and victimhood during the asylum procedure. Otherwise, they are not credible, but, afterward, in the society should show their “integration” and capacity to become independent. From the stories of my interlocutors, I felt that a reward-and-punishment model (Marchetti, 2020) is utilized to discipline people on the move. People who “love and respect” the country, learn the Greek language, show thankfulness are favored or are more respected compared to others who do not respect the conditions of hospitality (Kyriakidou, 2020). That illustrates how deservingness is reshaped; victimhood and vulnerability are replaced at a later stage by responsibility and independence (Wernesjö, 2020). From my perspective, this necessity to embody victimhood and treatment as a victim can obstruct people’s attempts to empower themselves (Wernesjö, 2020).

The hierarchies of deservingness captured in the Greek asylum system have legitimized a regime of containment (Tazzioli, 2020) for people on the move. With its swift pace of control, that regime of containment intends to decelerate and block movers’ mobility (Marchetti, 2020; Tazzioli, 2020). Simultaneously, it intends to impose a constant “training” for life in displacement (Marchetti, 2020), as they will not be eligible for protection and support, their trajectories to other EU countries are formally blocked, and they will not return to their country of origin.

Chapter 5 | “Unwrapping the helping hands”: Humanitarian and solidarity practices

The vignette of Fahrad and his navigational tactics confirm that understanding the migration apparatus involves the practices of various state and non-state actors beyond the spheres of bureaucracy (Schapendonk, 2020). His involvement in a grassroots initiative, Khora, and his interview preparation by an NGO lawyer can be regarded as interactions with the so-called “migration industry”. As a heterogeneous, complex web of relations, the migration industry blends actors with diverse interests (Schapendonk, 2020; Schapendonk, 2018). It brings a networked entity into the broader migration governance, in which the practices of facilitators, controllers of migration, and providers of assistance intersect and overlap.

In this chapter, my goal is to focus on the practices and synergies of the “rescue branch” (López-Sala & Godeau, 2016) of the “migration industry”, to understand how humanitarian and solidarity practices are positioned in the institutional landscape of migration management (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2020). Through that, I aim to show the blurred boundaries between care and control as well as the creation of certain moralities melted into humanitarian and solidarity practices, which is the core of this study.

Based on vast literature (Oikonomakis, 2018; Papataxiarchis, 2016; Rozakou, 2017b; Birey et al., 2019; Grewal, 2021; Mezzandra, 2020; Tazzioli & Walters, 2019), there are some fundamental dividing lines between humanitarianism and solidarity on a conceptual level. The fluidity of both notions, as well as the changing and multi-dimensional scene of the refugee support in Greece combined with the extended state of emergency, have sometimes made the boundaries between them more blurred (Thedossopoulos, 2016). From my perspective, the most decisive difference that I detected through my ethnographic research between those two terms is the relationship with people on the move. In Khora, as a grassroots initiative, members are friends and hang out together. In contrast, that spirit of coexistence is not encouraged in professional humanitarianism. In line with that, I remember when I applied to do my research to a big Greek NGO, in the researcher’s form, among the conditions, it was mentioned, “It is forbidden for the researcher to develop any form of relationship or friendship with research participants”.

In the sections followed, I will provide the understandings of my interlocutors around humanitarianism and solidarity to interpret how they relate those two notions to movers’ presence in the Greek context. In conjunction with that, through focusing on the “rescue branch” of the “migration industry”, as aforementioned, my goal is to show how power asymmetries and social inequalities (Cranston et al., 2018) are reproduced in (in) formal spaces of care and hospitality networks.

5.1 Understanding humanitarianism: I am here to help you

According to Mezzadra (2020), “humanity”, “humanism”, and “human” are contested concepts in contemporary academia as there is suspicion surrounding the uncritical use of these notions (p.431). Rozakou (2012) argues that those critiques of humanitarian practices underline the inherent “aporia of humanitarian governmentality”, i.e., that humanitarianism is based on inequality and hierarchical ordering as well as involves complexities and diverse actualities for both “providers” and “receivers” of aid (p.564). Dadusc & Mudu (2020), in their study concerning the criminalization of migrant solidarity, relate the Humanitarian Industrial Complex with the colonial history and practices of selection and regulation of migrants by international and national institutions, NGOs, public and private actors. In line with that, Vardis et al. (2019), in their research in migration management in Lesvos, argue that humanitarian governance is deployed to implement systems of classification based on alleviating suffering. Through that, humanitarian actors in multiple ways become complicit in producing governable populations via ordering at the border (Vardis et al., 2019).

The following collage of the quotes discusses the understandings around humanitarianism to connect it later with the moralities embedded in humanitarian practices. Like many authors (Dadusc & Mudu, 2020; Mezzandra, 2020; Rozakou, 2017b; Pallister-Wilkins, 2020), my interlocutors connect humanitarian practices with inequality, hierarchical relations, charity rhetoric, neo-liberalism, and apolitical altruism.

“...Humanitarianism is a top-down, humanitarianism is a nice word, but it also includes exploitation and injustice...”
(Tommy, caretaker at an NGO)

“...Humanitarianism is more of a fantasia, related to European and international organizations, NGOs, volunteering, which is not based on the city, but it’s something abstract and is dependent on top-down structures...”
(Ali, mover)

“..I think it's kind of mostly the global humanitarian scene, it's just kind of this colonialist thing..like having an idea of like people wanting to help people in the way that they want to help them and feeling good about doing this... organizations that profit from it, and that gets the gist, it's like its own little machine, and it perpetuates the divide between the more privileged and the less privileged nations, and it perpetuates the hierarchies in like the sense of like, people when they come You know, hearing this basically want to thank you for stuff {...}...It just creates imbalances. {...}. And especially when these people like feel the fact that people will feel grateful to you also perpetuates the hierarchies... Humanitarianism feels more like we are... like happy with the system, we realized the system has maybe not been

that fair to you, because it's not fair ...so we'll give you some stuff to try and make it a bit better. But we're happy to leave the world in this weird dynamic...”
(Allison, Khora member)

“...Humanitarianism is related to charity, and now it is connected with NGOs... it is far away from the idea of community, self-organization or cooperation at least on municipality level, now is related to NGOs and the state, people who offer their help do it under the idea of charity, possibly there are financial benefits or political benefits, in any case, their practices are not in favor for the refugees...”
(Panos, caretaker at an NGO)

The givers, the humanitarians, are presented as the ones endowed with agency and the capacity to support others (Bolotta, 2020), while the receivers of help are the pure, needy, innocent victims. That capacity to make decisions and categorizations over life and death with an assumed “god-like power” (Bolotta, 2020) illustrates that the contemporary ideas of humanitarian relief are interwoven with the historic legacies of Western colonialism and civilizing (Sandvik, 2020; Bolotta, 2020), as well as with paternalistic approaches concerning what is support, as Allison argues. Narratives of affection and “giving” in the public space are always directed from above to below, from the more powerful to the more fragile (Fassin, 2012, p.4). That makes the exercise of humanitarian practices a top-down procedure, as Tommy and Ali mention.

Within that idea of giving, humanitarianism has been related to charity. The charitable nature of humanitarianism was implied by Allison and introduced by Panos with a negative connotation. Drawing on Žižek (2009), Theodossopoulos (2016) introduces the idea that charity is used as a self-exonerating and misleading trick within today’s cultural capitalism (p. 169). Humanitarianism and philanthropy are accused of being tied to innocence, compassion, and acting in a state of emergency (Ticktin, 2016). Papada et al. (2019), concerning the state of emergency, argue that the invocation to emergency contributes to the de-politicization of the suffering and shifts the discourse away from the structural causes of it (Rozakou, 2020a; Theodossopoulos, 2016). Those imbalances depict the acceptance and reproduction of the current status quo. That legitimizes the “bare life argument” (Fassin, 2012). Agier (2011), drawing on Agamben, refers to bare life as the condition under which the person is identified as a mere biological existence “zoe” without social existence “bios”, placed in the space of exception and always under control (p.148). In agreement with that, Dadusc & Mudu (2020) argue that humanitarian practices weaken and discipline migrants’ agency through the commodification of suffering.

Although, at first impression, the humanitarian practices are about feelings rather than entitlements (Ticktin, 2016), and, humanitarianism seems apolitical, we should not underestimate that this asymmetry in the relationship between the “giver” and the “receiver” is highly political (Fassin, 2012). It is significant to understand

humanitarianism not as a value-neutral field but rather as a field of actions in which the hierarchies of power are perpetuated and utilized for the governance of populations (Pallister-Wilkins, 2015).

5.1.2 Crafting the deserving refugee through vulnerability and diligence

As aforementioned in chapter 2, the years that followed the “long summer of migration” in Greece were accompanied by the outsourcing of hospitality and care to professional humanitarian organizations and a sprout of NGO-led projects, which create a new “branch” of “migration professionals” (Teloni et al., 2020). Those “migration professionals” involved in non-governmental and international bodies in public and private sectors have taken over certain tasks linked to migration management (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2020), such as procedures of identification and classification (Rozakou, 2012; Papada et al., 2019). That illustrates the existing hierarchical and disciplinary connotations in settings of hospitality.

This section examines how spaces of formal humanitarian care can reproduce the figure of the “deserving guest” through narratives of vulnerability and diligence, relatively in line with what was discussed in chapter 4 concerning deservingness in the asylum procedure. Through that, I intend to show the relational aspect of humanitarian support (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2020; Rozakou, 2012) and how the image of the “worthy guest” is linked to certain understandings of cultural schemata of sociality and social relations (Rozakou, 2012).

“...I think it depends, like on each NGO...I guess, like a lot of NGOs get funded from states or other organizations...They only want to help children or vulnerable people. People need to prove that [they are] vulnerable to get [their] asylum. It's also I need to prove vulnerable, to be able to get food from this organization, I need to like people will always feel like they need to tell you a story that we like... people email the committee and it's like, I want some food...and then they'll be like, I have a daughter who's sick and {...}...people feel like they need to have all of these elements of suffering and vulnerabilities in their life in order to get food from an NGO...”
(Allison, Khora member)

As aforementioned in chapter 4 and Allison argues, the focus on suffering necessitates performances of destitution and powerlessness (Turner, 2021). The “worthy guests” are presented as needy, apolitical figures, dependent on the humanitarian intentions of their host (Smith & Waite, 2019; Rozakou, 2012). That illustrates how spaces of humanitarian care can produce their politics of victimhood and dependency (Aparna & Schapendonk, 2018). Those who can help can produce new boundaries and consolidate existing categorizations (Pallister-Wilkins, 2018). So, hospitality is

deployed as a tool of differentiation that legitimizes broader discriminations based on vulnerability. In that space, vulnerability is developed into an instrument of legitimacy (Agier, 2011). Ticktin (2016) argues that humanitarian solutions are dependent on individuals' sensibilities which are constructed by gendered and racialized beliefs of who is deserving of support (p.265). In the box below, I present the interrelation between vulnerability and gender. According to my interlocutors, it is considered the most common dividing criterion through the practices of humanitarian organizations.

Box 2: Gender under vulnerability lens in the Greek context

In the Greek context, associating gender with vulnerability through humanitarian practices has been questioned, as the provisional character of care seems to obscure the vulnerabilities of male migrants (Grotti, Malakasis, Quagliariello & Sahraoui, 2018) as well as there is a tendency to treat women as victims (Kofman, 2019).

“...Young single men are excluded from support networks, this is based on stereotypical understanding concerning not only of the refugee issues but also of what is male and female. The woman is by definition vulnerable while the man can survive all alone. I am not saying that these needs do not exist, but we have to consider also people who are not recognized as vulnerable...”

(Elena, Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology & editor/reporter for Greek independent medium)

As Elena comments, “vulnerability” as a term is mostly associated with women compared to men (Sandvik, 2020). That illustrates how humanitarian practices are influenced by cultural ideologies. Turner (2021) argues that the “group approach” to vulnerability, whereby, specific categories of people are classified as vulnerable within the humanitarian work confirms the racialized perceptions over men and women in the Global South (p.7). Those gendered assumptions consolidate the racialized depictions of women inherently vulnerable, while men’s vulnerability seems unimaginable (Turner, 2021). Through their practices, humanitarians promote a form of hegemonic masculinity, in which women and children are vulnerable victims and men are considered invulnerable and capable of surviving alone (Sözer, 2019). That confirms the paternalistic nature of humanitarianism and its reliance on the dual notions of care and control. The “needy” person, in that context woman, is depicted as inferior (Sözer, 2019), while theoretically the less needy, the man is marginalized.

As the example shows, the centrality to vulnerability feeds into blind-spot approaches that do not consider the multidimensional disadvantages of preventing individuals from satisfying their basic needs. Furthermore, that tendency contributes to ignorance concerning the variable nature of vulnerability through time and space (Turner, 2021), as well as the invisible vulnerabilities that a person can encounter.

On the other side of the argument, Merlín-Escorza et al. (2020), in their study concerning hospitality practices in Mexico, refer to the “concern” existing in the space of the shelter that movers run the risk of normalizing the aid they receive (p.12), which can lead to a state of passivity and dependence. Similarly, some of my interlocutors working in the humanitarian sector argued the same: the necessity to “break the bond of aid” after a while. That shows how humanitarian organizations seek a form of management in their practices which affects movers’ decision-making

(p.12). That “management process” involves practices of internalized disciplining. Carers can act as discipliners and exercise biopolitical power over movers through their attempts to “advise” and “educate” them (Rozakou, 2012). That can lead movers to adopt specific attitudes to become more deserving.

“...I believe it [behavior] plays a very important role, I could see that in the camp, there was a family.. the father was a very acceptable and charming figure, he was very friendly in the camp community, he was helping a lot there, doing manual work..he had more favorable treatment by everybody, also from the organizations, because from his side, he was helping a lot, his son also worked as a translator, they were involved in many organizations, so, he was treated favorably..”
(Anna, former employee at an NGO)

Anna argues that people who construct themselves as responsible by demonstrating their willingness to work, diligence, and education-orientation (Wernesjö, 2020) have a more favorable treatment by humanitarian organizations. In line with that, Maestri & Monforte (2020), in their study concerning the refugees’ deservingness through volunteers’ practices, argue that their participants relate deserving refugees with the figure of the resilient agent who withstands dreadful situations (p.926). In contrast to the obligatory performances of vulnerability, here, the hardships are not used to boost depictions of victimhood but rather to show movers’ determination, strength, and exceptional courage (Maestri & Monforte, 2020). Similarly, Marchetti (2020) argues that in volunteer projects aiming at refugee support in Italy, movers are assessed based on their gratitude, willingness to join the community of value, and reciprocate for their reception and assistance (p.244). In line with that, Guidici (2021), in her research concerning the Italian asylum bureaucracy, argues that reception workers in Italy encourage movers to display a “dutiful, willing and caring” attitude to show their eligibility for social and legal rights (p.28). That normalizes a feeling of obligation to repay the hospitality they receive (Marchetti, 2020, p.245).

Merlín-Escorza et al. (2020) argue that spaces of care can be visualized as places where different actors interact and negotiate the social landscape of the existing power relations. Hospitality signifies the conditional and hierarchical inclusion of the recipient in the social world of the host (Rozakou, 2012, p. 574). Due to that, the constructed hierarchies through performance-based deservingness place some movers in a higher, more favorable position than others (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2020).

5.2 Understanding solidarity: We are in the same boat

According to Rakopoulos (2015), solidarity emerges as a ‘conceptual bridge’ in times of crisis which situates people in proximity and interdependence. Similarly, Papataxiarchis (2016) argues that when social cohesion is under threat, solidarity emerges as the alternative horizon to combat alienation (p.205). Cabot (2020), concerning solidarity in Greece, argues that Greece from a site of “marginality” was moved to a center of global attention due to the overlapping “crises”: the financial crisis and the so-called refugee crisis (p.232). As played out in diverse contexts and facets of what is known as the Greek Solidarity Movement, solidarity is a very heterogeneous and shifting concept (Cabot, 2020, p.232).

This section discussed the diverse understandings concerning solidarity practices in the Greek context to show how hierarchies still linger over in informal spaces of support, despite their fervent opposition to state-led (DeBono, 2018) policies. In line with authors (Theodossopoulos; Cabot, 2020; Rozakou, 2016b; Cantat & Feischmidt, 2019; Witcher, 2020) concerning the vision and values of adherents of solidarity initiatives, my interlocutors referred to co-existence, bridging the power imbalances, mistrust of government and institutionalized charity.

“..It's not like an organized business charity, it's something very separate thing. The boundaries of it are more broken down... Solidarity is at [a] real level in the squats, the relationship between the two populations. And the fact that they are primarily friends, it was like, yeah, it was solidarity between political movements within like Greek society and understanding how that was related to the state of affairs of asylum seekers in this society...”
(Brittany, Khora member)

I guess solidarity to me is just the idea of working together to like, build something, and share mutual strength in some way. And I guess, like, I guess, like a big global struggle against capitalism. And so solidarity is just like, I see you're affected by capitalism this way.. we need to work together to be resilient, and somehow challenge the system... We support ourselves apart from the system. So, like, we find ways of living and living well, even though all of this is going on... contributing to a community and supporting community strength that helps everybody in it equally, which I guess is what solidarity is...”
(Allison, Khora member)

“.. In the last few years also, the notion of solidarity is used in a devious way, I think it started to be used with a delay...as a notion, it has a political tone, it is related to the Left, leftist organizations, self-organized initiatives...The first thing that comes to mind is “There is no land for the proletarians”, there is no division between them and us, we act collectively and do something for all people because possibly tomorrow it will be us in their position, with the person who came to our country, we have the

same struggle, we have the same problems, for the same things we will fight..”
(Panos, caretaker at an NGO)

“..In solidarity sometimes or a lot of times you try to not just help the people...not just to like hand out, some food or some stuff, like their immediate needs, you kind of try to empower them it's like the old saying, teach a man... how to teach a man...to give a man a fish you'll feed them for once... teach a man how to fish you feed them for life. In solidarity sometimes, we try...to educate people...to help them with getting a job. But I don't think a lot of humanitarian-like charity groups do this. Yeah, so like, that just makes people dependable on this kind of stuff...”
(Behzoud, mover)

These statements connect solidarity with a sense of proximity across differences (Cabot, 2020). Non-hierarchical participation of people with diverse experiences and backgrounds is presented as the principles of solidarity (Pendakis, 2020). The principles of horizontality and egalitarianism (Pendakis, 2020) contribute to interdependence and mutual sharing; as Brittany mentions, the “boundaries are broken down”. As some of my interlocutors, she defines solidarity in opposition to top-down humanitarian professionalism and the dominant form of hospitality. As some of my informants, she relates solidarity with the squats existing until 2019 in some Greek cities. She perceives them as spaces of genuine solidarity, where nurturing friendships between solidarians and movers is possible. The value of living together combined with being informal produces modes of socialities that contribute to inclusion more efficiently compared to humanitarian and governmental practices, which seem to restrict people's autonomy agency (Cantat, 2021). Those socialities of solidarity (Rozakou, 2016b) described as practices of sharing and socializing (Cantat, 2021) that attempt to materialize an alternative vision for society are used as fertile soil for common struggles. Brittany stresses that acts of solidarity show the political disagreement with the European border regime and underline the interrelation of different precarities in the Greek context.

Allison understands solidarity as togetherness and a shared struggle regardless of race, gender, nationality, and class (Cabot, 2021) against the injustices inflicted by neoliberal capitalism (Siapera, 2019). She associates it with being a member of an autonomous and self-managed community (Siapera, 2019). By referring to that different form of sociality, she introduces the idea to “challenge the system”. Similarly, interlocutors of Grewal (2021), in her research in grassroots and solidarity initiatives in Greece, argued that their political work is to scandalize the practices of the EU, Greek government as well as NGOs (p.85). Panos includes only the self-organized and radically leftist initiatives under the label of solidarity. He also links it to the collective struggles. In line with that, Rozakou (2017b) argues that in the Greek context, solidarity was limited mainly to anarchist and leftist circles (p.99), but,

recently, the notion was diffused and has obtained a more radical meaning after the experience of austerity.

Furthermore, as Allison Panos makes no distinction between migrants and those in solidarity with them, but rather he emphasizes the recognition of commonalities (Cantat, 2016). Additionally, Behzoud links solidarity with empowerment, an attempt to challenge the narratives that invisibilize and silence (Birey et al., 2019) movers and represent them vulnerable and needy (Grewal, 2021). For him, the attempt to empower people is absent in humanitarian practices, which tend to reproduce relationships of dependency.

The meanings of solidarity vary and are shifting (Serntedakis, 2017). Acting effectively based on horizontality principles involves dilemmas concerning acknowledging and managing the difference (Cabot, 2020). In the next section, my goal is to illustrate how the “refugee welcome” language in informal spaces of care, in practice, sometimes, is not dissimilar to formal hospitality frameworks (Cabot, 2020).

5.2.1 Friends and clients

The grassroots initiatives under the label of solidarity (Cantat, 2021), typically, compared to the conventional forms of care, try to establish a different relationship with the people on the move; whereas humanitarian and charity organizations relate to them in terms of distribution and support with a deadline, in grassroots, there is an intention to act with horizontality and build relationships of reciprocity (Dijstelbloem & van der Veer, 2021). That “coming-togetherness” of people participating at a grassroots initiative such as Khora can be seen as part of active social-support networks beyond the state (Aparna & Schapendonk, 2018), as the members reject traditional citizenship narratives. Although initiatives as such pose challenges to the dynamics of guest-host relations, as well as to the hostile policies in Greece and Europe (Sandri, 2018), presumed notions of help/gratitude, friend/ troublemaker are implicitly or explicitly embedded in them (Aparna, Kande, Schapendonk & Kramsch, 2020).

Understanding the ambiguous social relations and the diverse levels of deservingness emerging in alternative forms of care is significant; firstly, due to their informality, they are regarded as an alternative to the “humanitarian machine” without the expertise and the established institutional structures of aid organizations (Sandri, 2018, p.66). Combined with that, they stand as a symbol against states’ violence and migration regimes’ practices (Sandri, 2018). Nevertheless, gratitude and emotional attachment as “feeling rules” (Maestri & Monforte, 2020) can influence their practices and produce the divisions that they fight against. In this section, my goal is to show, through two vignettes, how the societal expectation of the polite, grateful refugee (Casati, 2018; Aparna et al., 2020) exist in spaces of alternative care, how “friends”

are treated differently, and, generally, how movers are categorized according to informal hierarchies of merit (Witcher, 2020).

Auto- ethnographical entry 1: “I don’t want them to thank me but...”

“...On my first day at KAST, in the late afternoon, someone rang our bell. When Natalie opened the door, I could hear a male voice yelling at her. Some of us went out of the room to see what was happening. Directly, I saw the reaction of some more experienced volunteers, “Not him, again”. They informed me that this man was used to coming to our office at least twice per week since November 2020, asking for help that KAST cannot offer. According to their narratives, that person has received a lot of help in the past, while his demanding attitude makes cooperation with him very difficult. After an intense conversation with a volunteer, he left saying: “You help only the Syrians and the Afghans; you do not care for Turkish people”. Later, in our discussion about the incident, the volunteer who argued with him, felt guilty for her attitude, while others mentioned that his behavior makes cooperation with him extra difficult. A volunteer mentioned: “The majority is grateful”, another said: “I don’t want them to feel thankful for my help but being that difficult does not help”, “also, he is in contact with at least five more organizations and the network of Turkish people in Greece is strong”. Finally, we decided that the next time, we would tell him that he has to contact us via e-mail due to COVID-19 measures, and we would come back to him. Through that incident, I felt that being demanding and disputatious makes an individual being considered as a troublemaker and possibly less deserving...” (Diary notes, May 2021)

Casati (2018), in her study concerning the interaction of refugees with SPAR’s workers in Italy, argues that movers’ distrust provoked workers’ frustration and led to informal assessments based on how movers behave. In line with that, the vignette shows that reactions of distrust by the mover and his family fed into volunteers’ distrust and the other way around. Additionally, the volunteers described movers’ behavior as veritable injustice (Casati, 2018) because, according to their accounts, the Turkish family has received much support. Combined with that, some of them implied that they are a small group of volunteers who try to help and do not expect or receive any kind of profit for their help, but still, they have to encounter offensive behaviors. That incident implicitly depicts the expectation to show gratitude (Aparna et al., 2020). When it is not expressed, it produces feelings of disappointment and frustration to the volunteers who try to establish a “welcome culture” (Aparna et al., 2020; Aparna & Schapendonk, 2018). Aparna et al. (2020) argue that the image of the grateful refugee is compatible with the wider European script of migrant integration (p.11). Similarly, Taylor (2016), in exploring the Hungarians’ experience of reception in the UK in 1956/7, refers to a habit of “national self-congratulation” to describe the

narratives of volunteers who position Hungarian refugees as charitable subjects centering on the performances of gratitude (p.132).

The question of gratitude creates an expectation that movers should focus on all the good that formal and informal hospitality networks, as well as the local communities, try to do for them (Casati, 2018). The aberration from the “norm” encourages the consolidation of labels: nice/ troublemaker, willing/ irritable, which can have practical consequences on movers (Casati, 2018; Taylor, 2016). In our daily activities in KAST, I often felt that the interaction with people considered “difficult” or “abrupt” brought me in distress. Therefore, in my aim to avoid tension, implicitly, I acted as a discipliner, and I tended to demarcate the boundaries of our relationship. At the same time, if I have to be honest, my behavior was utterly different with people who seemed more “polite” and “nice” or are “friends”, as I show in the following vignette.

Auto-ethnographical entry 2: “Friends come first.”

“...I was at the kitchen since the early morning, and around 12 o’clock, Fahrhad arrived. While discussing our news, he asked me if I could do a favor for him and go together to the Asylum Services as he had his registration appointment. He thought that it would be helpful if a Greek person was there with him. I did not think much about my schedule the day of the appointment or which were my responsibilities at the office, automatically, I felt that Fahrhad is a friend, a person that I appreciate and who had helped me a lot with my research, so it is the least that I can do for him...” (Diary notes, July 2021)

Sandri (2018), in her study concerning the practices of grassroots groups in the camp of Calais, argues that volunteers’ sense of purpose is strengthened, as they feel they have the responsibility towards their friends living in the camp (p.76). Similarly, in the space of KAST, I felt that the emotional and personal connections with movers who participate in Khora Social Kitchen or other activities have strengthened volunteers’ commitment to helping them. For example, the devotion to helping them navigate the Greek bureaucracy, connecting them with lawyers and useful networks, was sometimes greater compared to the public asking for support but had no connection with the group. That shows how volunteers can employ their discretionary power (Witcher, 2020) to help their friends. From my perspective, that personal commitment to friends’ cases is not always untouched by an extra emotional burden, especially in cases of failure. When I was taking over the responsibility to help a friend from Khora Kitchen, I often felt that my contribution should be meaningful because I was connected with that person with a stronger emotional bond.

Those two vignettes illustrate a dimension of othering the “deserving” movers from the undeserving ones” (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2020) in informal settings of care based on social logics and moral economies (Witcher, 2021). Certain people under certain

conditions or by certain people (Aparna & Schapendonk, 2018, p. 3) are (un) worthy of care. Like Casati (2018), I argue that the same behaviors do not always lead to the same outcome, e.g., from my experience, an offensive behavior provokes certain feelings of aversion, but factors such as gender, family status, mental health, emotional connection lead to different approaches. Important in understanding how the notions of deservingness are (de) stabilized and shifted is to examine the role of emotions in practice at an individual level within a specific context (Maestri & Monforte, 2020).

5.3 Concluding remarks

The chapter's purpose is to answer my second sub-question: *How, when, and by whom is deservingness enacted in humanitarian and solidarity practices for individuals experiencing legal precarity in Greece?* Although based on the accounts of my interlocutors, I present the diverse understandings concerning humanitarianism and solidarity, like Rozakou (2017) and Pendakis (2020), my intention here is not to examine the ideological purity of humanitarian and solidarity practices but rather to capture the moralities, relations, and changes in the contemporary humanitarian space of Greece.

The multi-faceted “rescue branch” of the “migration industry” in Greece underlines the ambiguous apparatus between facilitation and control. The same actors can act as carers and discipliners, punishers, facilitators, and controllers in different contexts. Approaching “migration industry” as a highly dynamic landscape (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2020), in which actors from civil society to global governance institutions, policies, politics, and rules intersect, allows us to understand the overlapping responsibilities, the shifting roles, and strange alliances (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2020) between actors with diverse interests. Additionally, exploring the “migration industry” and its “branches” shows that beyond fixed frameworks, rules, and practices, specific encounters emerge that allow for social negotiation (Schapendonk, 2018). That helps interpret movers' encounters and the meaningful or disappointing involvement of diverse actors in movers' navigation. I will elaborate on that further in chapter 6.

Through the way the chapter has been structured, we have seen that some practices both in formal and informal spaces of care are implicit or explicit reactions to the repressive migration management architecture (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2020). Nevertheless, those narratives are challenged by performativities related to deservingness, such as showing particular features of vulnerability, diligence, and gratitude. In line with that, DeBono (2018) argues that hospitality is a relationship of a strong power imbalance and control of the host over the guest. Concerning professional humanitarianism, most of my interlocutors argued that humanitarian action, at least to some extent, tends to reproduce the subjectivities and stereotypical

categorizations created by the Greek policies and the European refugee regime (Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019). Compassion is deployed as a form of justice based on the exceptionality of an individual (Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019). That focus on suffering legitimizes “bare life”, reduces the political and social subjectivities of migrants, and renders them passive recipients. That diverts attention from the structural political causes and public responsibilities (Cantat & Feischmidt, 2019).

Additionally, in line with the Greek and the EU migration regime, to some extent, the “paradox” of being vulnerable but also resilient and independent is reproduced, as more “charming figures” have a more favorable treatment compared to the rest. Concerning solidarity practices, based on my personal experience from a grassroots initiative, the practices of care are understood to a great extent beyond “bare life” (Sandri, 2018) as well as beyond the rigid distinctions between refugees and economic migrants (Witcher, 2020). Nevertheless, certain moralities still reproduce hierarchies of “more deserving” individuals, based on movers’ performances of gratitude and their strong or weak connections with other members. That illustrates that in sites of solidarity, despite the spirit of horizontality and a diverse understanding of the political, they are not immune to internal control and power relations (Cantat, 2021). From my own experience, I often felt that I acted based on my emotions concerning who and how “I am helping”. From performing the “Good Samaritan” (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2020) to acting as a discipliner to show what kind of behavior is acceptable, in line with DeBono (2018), I argue that in addition to state actors, non-state actors, from professionals to volunteers and activists are also “making policy” which affects movers’ decision-making and trajectories positively and negatively.

To conclude, like Dijstelbloem & van der Veer (2021), I argue that shifting tasks and duties to non-state actors resonates with a sense of responsabilization, as they are rendered responsible for tasks that are under the state’s domain. From my perspective, that illustrates how, sometimes inescapably, care and control are developed in mutual interaction. Exploring the “rescue branch” and generally the “migration industry” can bring valuable insights into the fluidity of networks, the mechanisms through which movers navigate themselves. That can help us understand the complex interactions between state, economy, non-governmental organizations, informal initiatives, and people on the move (Cranston et al., 2018).

Chapter 6 |

Movers' experiences: Navigating the Greek labyrinth

Hussein, one of my interlocutors, introduced me to his friend and former teammate, Ahman. In mid-August 2021 with Ahman, we arranged a virtual meeting on Facebook, as he recently moved to Luxembourg. Ahman is a young professional football player from Palestine. After having spent roughly four years in Greece and having received two rejections, he finally moved to Luxembourg approximately eight months ago, as with his Luxembourgish girlfriend, they signed a civil partnership. From the early beginning of our discussion, while he was describing his daily routine in Luxembourg, I felt that he is full of energy; he splits his days between his part-time job, football practice, and language classes. Concerning his time in Greece, he often referred to how bad, unfair, and corrupted the Greek asylum system is and how state and non-state actors exploit movers' ignorance concerning the asylum procedure.

On the other hand, he mentioned that he misses the "Greek lifestyle" and his network of friends and contacts in the country. Regarding his "networks", he was involved in Greek football clubs and met famous football agents. Through them, despite the difficulties concerning the paperwork, he played in some teams, and until his leaving, he was playing and coaching at a refugee team, to whom he refers as his family in Greece. Furthermore, due to his growing popularity, some journals approached him. In our discussion, he referred to one question that was made to him during an interview:

"..They were telling me: "What's your message to the Asylum or the government?"... Or something like this... "Okay, your life now is changing you have the document"... But I told him: "Yes, my life[is changing]... I am one person of millions; there are many guys behind me... We are more active ...we have a vision, a dream... you're just destroying our life... our dream... There are many people... they can make something and bring new things to the country..."

As Ahman confirms, dealing with the documentation regime is a defining feature of what it means to be a mover in Greece (Tuckett, 2015), but also his vignette shows that the evolvement of individual pathways is highly dependent on social networks and (un) expected encounters (Schapendonk, 2018).

This chapter aims to dig deeper into the temporal and arbitrary aspects of the migration regime to show how the law is enforced by making people wait (Eule et al., 2019) and experiencing uncertainty. Combined with that, my goal is to illustrate how

the ambiguity that characterizes the Greek bureaucracy, beyond frustration and anxiety, allows for flexibility, through which movers, as active agents, use their time and develop strategies to manipulate and negotiate legal and social loopholes (Tuckett, 2015). Additionally, considering the system of deterrence that is exercised and pushes movers to the margins of the law, intending to illegalize them, I aim to examine how the line between deserving and undeserving individuals is drawn during limbo (Artero & Fontanari, 2021). Furthermore, due to the involvement of multiple versions of “helping hands” in movers’ trajectories, I study movers’ interaction with the “rescue industry”. In line with Pathirage & Collyer (2011) and Schapendonk (2020), I argue that concerning and beyond the “helping hands”, social ties as means to achieve social capital are an uncertain resource that requires efforts to be maintained and can function both as a positive force but also cause of disappointments.

6.1 Let's gamble

Eule et al. (2019) argue that in the daily work of bureaucracy, certain opaqueness is strategically used by state officials to enable law enforcement (p.126). In line with that, Giudici (2021), in her study regarding the asylum bureaucracy in Italy, argues that asylum seekers encounter a fuzzy and intricate bureaucratic machine, which suspends them in a marginal position and forces them to experience a constant waiting. Similarly, most of my interlocutors referred to the unpredictability, endless waiting, confusion, and irrationality that they have experienced through their attempts to navigate the Greek asylum system. Those features have converted granting asylum into a matter of luck (Griffith, 2012), in which surprise and discrimination are inherently related (Schapendonk, 2017). Uncertainty as a constitutive part of that “jackpot process” should not be considered an unintentional result of structural violence but rather a deliberate governance strategy (Artero & Fontanari, 2021). In agreement with that, Cabot (2012), in her research concerning the Greek asylum system, argues that limbo is not a product of bureaucratic sluggishness but of policing and surveillance at the Greek and EU level (p.12). On the other hand, we should not underestimate that uncertainty in that semi-legal space also allows flexibility (Tuckett, 2015).

“..It is rather complicated. In many ways, it is, it is really, it doesn't make any sense...

They are taking the interviews again and again. And they are making it longer and more complicated and harder for people...Instead of, you know, asking them to prove the reason that they left the country recently, they are asking them to give them a reason that they didn't stay in Turkey... They are, you know, breaking their deal with Turkey that they added in 2016, about deporting of people from islands, and now they're doing it for all people even from those of the mainland and seems [a] real failure, it is not at all, but they don't really want to make a solution for that.. it doesn't

have any exact, you know, [the] reason for those that they get rejection or those that they don't, the ones that they get subsidiary protection and those that they get asylum..."

(Deena, mover)

"..There's some element of luck. I see people that really are more suitable to be granted asylum being rejected, I see people that if you want to be harsh and say they don't have much of a claim, yet they like they get accepted. On the first Hi, so..."

(Behzoud, mover)

In Schapendonk (2020), one of his informants refers to Italy as a 'snake way country' (p.117) to describe corruption, limitation, and vagueness concerning the Italian asylum system. From my perspective, many of my interlocutors would say the same for Greece. The accounts of Deena and Behzoud illustrate the "legal cynicism" that is fostered among movers due to experiencing the discrepancies between law in theory and law in practice (Eule et al., 2019). During my fieldwork, I met many people who had similarities in their cases, but they received contradictory information and had completely different treatment. Although that sounds like exceptionality, I would say that this unpredictability, mystification, and arbitrariness are much in the spirit of how the asylum process is and how the bureaucracy generally works in Greece (Cabot, 2014). The reliance on vague interpretations of law reflects the logic of classification and exclusion embedded in national institutions (Artero & Fontanari, 2021; Cabot, 2012). That encourages decisions based on deservingness and increases the unpredictability of law (Eule et al., 2019). Many of my interlocutors perceive the law as absent, and decision-making is based on bureaucrats' autonomy, personal preference, clientelism, or pure luck (Eule et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, that mingling of formal and informal bureaucratic practices enables movers to bend the rules and "make the impossible possible" (Tuckett, 2015, p.14). Specifically, through engaging with the arbitrary and uncertain aspects of the Greek bureaucracy, movers develop strategies, adopt particular attitudes and learn the "real rules" of how the "system" works (Tuckett, 2015).

"...Well, I will be honest, because I have heard, and I can see, through my friends, there are some friends, they kn[e]w a person is working in the asylum, they got the documents without interview. I know some people, they went to the interview, they didn't say anything, [and] they got the document..." (Ahman, mover)

Schapendonk (2018) uses the term “social negotiation” to describe how movers build and “massage” their relationship with the actors involved in the migration industry. In line with that, I argue that movers’ tactics to access the uncertain “terrain” (Tuckett, 2015) of the Greek bureaucratic regime and their semi-formal interaction with it are practices of their social negotiation, intending to mobilize their contacts in a way that helps them to achieve their objectives. Similarly, according to Tuckett (2015), the capacity to maneuver and access the bureaucratic regime is highly contingent upon social networks and sometimes financial resources.

As the account of Ahman shows and Chauvin & Mascareñas (2014) argue, movers can acquire proofs of formal civic membership through informal means. The absence of control from the respective institutions, acts of “bureaucratic sabotages” of sympathetic servants who place their professionalism and humanitarian concerns ahead of restrictive legal definitions, as well as practices of forgery and bribery, can lead to formal outcomes stemming from informal arrangements (p.424). In discussions with my informants, many referred to accessing contacts, bribing lawyers, and paying for the paperwork in the formal and informal economy to navigate the Greek bureaucracy successfully. From my perspective, it is essential to consider that deploying documents as a “bargain chip” (Cabot, 2014) has mobilized state and non-state actors who try to capitalize on movers’ pathways. For this reason, it is significant to take into account that, despite the importance of “inside knowledge”, playing with the “system rules” can lead movers to lose out” (Tuckett, 2015). During my fieldwork, I met many individuals who had spent extortionate amounts to lawyers to accelerate their procedure or represent them in the court or release them from detention, but finally, the lawyer “disappeared”.

The statements above illustrate that movers often receive insufficient, confusing, and inaccurate information in their everyday encounters with caseworkers, police, state officials, and generally actors involved in their trajectories (Eule et al., 2019). These contradictions and indeterminacies reflect the multifarious nature of the state. In line with Tuckett (2015), Rozakou (2017), and Eule et al. (2019), I argue that uncertainty, arbitrariness, and messiness are reconciled and produce state as a solid entity and ideological instrument, the so-called “state effect”. That facilitates law enforcement and control practices but also depicts the fragility of lawfulness. These fluid openings allow for social negotiation in an uncertain space and articulate the relation dimension of the situations at play (Schapendonk, 2020, p. 138). This unpredictable relationality can lead to opportunities and successful outcomes, but also extended uncertainty and disappointments, which confirm that navigating the Greek asylum bureaucracy remains a “matter of luck”.

6.2 Ways to wait

“Perimene” (Wait) is a common word in Greece that every mover listens, as one of my interlocutors had told me. As aforementioned in the previous chapters, complex bureaucratic asylum procedures, unachievable deadlines, constant postponements, and delays are deployed as techniques to discipline and govern people on the move (Bjertrup et al., 2021; Jacobsen, 2021; Rozakou, 2021). The condition of waiting is intertwined with the experience of illegalized migration (Rozakou, 2021) and normalizes those mechanisms, which produce further uncertainty (Biehl, 2015). Beyond a tool of deterrence, Karlsen (2021) argues that “waiting” can function as a technology of patience to make people follow a self-control path. On the opposite side, some movers cannot wait and try to escape from legal precarity and spatial immobility. From the accounts of my interlocutors, it became clear to me that waiting is an important facet of their (im) mobility (Jacobsen & Karlsen, 2021) and navigation.

From my perspective, it is significant to understand the condition of waiting in terms of heterogeneity and relationality (Drangslund, 2021, p.76). This section discusses the diverse “approaches” toward encountering limbo. My goal here is to show how waiting, and the ways of making use of it are utilized as deservingness criteria among movers. Waiting, beyond an “empty interlude”, can be a hyper-active experience and a form of resistance to the border regime (Vianelli, 2021).

“Admirable” waiting

“..I learned English by myself because I didn't know where to go...I had to do something for myself. I started to learn English through friends... through YouTube. I started to learn English because when I arrived in Greece I did not even know how to say hello in English... It was difficult. So I learned the language and then after I said: “I have to do something for myself. What I can do?, I don't have friends. I don't have anything but I know how to play football.”...Because I was a professional in Palestine...I started to search through Facebook the clubs saying: “Hello, I am Ahman, I play football”...I hear through friends there is a team... it's called “Hope refugee”... And then we played in this team, I became the captain of this team. We played really good with this team...we are as [a] family not just friends in this team, it doesn't matter from where you're coming ...[we are] supporting each other because we are in the same situation...”

(Ahman, mover)

In the discussions with my interlocutors, I realized that all of them, despite experiencing limbo, are very active, e.g., learning languages, Greek and English, volunteering and working, studying, participating in activities, etc. As Ahman's

account shows, people often deploy all the possible options to make the state of precarity productive and their irregularized living more bearable (Karlsen, 2021). As aforementioned at the beginning of the chapter, Ahman had been involved in football clubs, volunteering with NGOs, and language classes. Someone would say that waiting for him was transformed into creativity and building a network. Concerning the hierarchies of deservingness, he treated that state of waiting as a “good citizen” (Vianelli et al., 2021). He invested in his “integration” with developing his language skills and socio-cultural adaptation (Marchetti, 2020).

In this perspective, waiting is not seen as “empty time” but privileges an understanding of “integration” (Jacobsen, 2021). Similarly, Guidici (2021), regarding encouraging movers to become volunteers and contribute to the community of value, argues that forms of recognition are granted to individuals ready to conform to the stereotypical representation of the European citizen (p.28). That encourages practices of exclusion for the “less integrated” and those who want to follow a different path, as I will present in the vignette below.

I cannot wait!

Auto-ethnographic entry 3: Rahid

“...I was at the Khora Kitchen, and Rahid entered. Rahid is an Iranian young, very cheerful guy, having spent roughly eight months in Greece, most of it in Athens. When he entered, I noticed that he had dyed his hair. He laughed at me, saying: “Dear, I am Polish now, tomorrow I am leaving for Milan...I will try it...” I wished him good luck. The day after, he texted me that he did not manage to board the plane as the police confiscated his fake passport. He will try his luck again...” (Diary, July 2021)

At that time, Rahid had attempted multiple times to move from different airports in the Greek mainland and islands. He had attempted to reach France and Italy unsuccessfully a couple of times. He had been stopped and arrested by the police and spent a couple of months in jail. In August 2021, finally, he managed to reach Munich, Germany. From there, he wants to continue his journey to the UK. Apart from Rahid, during my fieldwork, I felt that experiencing limbo can make movers very active from a different perspective. The uncertainty perpetuates the desire and the need to be constantly mobile (Wajsberg, 2020). Movers try their luck and cross the borders by their means instead of waiting out (Bjertrup et al., 2021). At Khora, many movers-volunteers try their luck to leave Greece and move abroad. Some of them succeed and send their greetings to the group from Germany, Italy, and France.

People staying behind congratulate them and wish them all the best in their new life. Others, who do not succeed this time, certainly will try again.

Rahid's vignette shows how the "internal externalities" (Schapendonk, 2017) of the mobility regime; the structures set up by national and supranational regimes (Wajsberg, 2020), enforce movers to experience immobility and are the cause for an onward journey. Their desire to escape the precarious legal conditions becomes, sometimes combined with other reasons, their motivation to move across EU borders (Schapendonk, 2017). That non-passive state of encountering uncertainty demonizes those movers and frames them as no longer needing protection. In examining the role of liminality in determining deservingness in Greece, Tunaboylu & van Liempt (2020), argue that people who decide to move out are considered "law-breakers", politically dangerous, and self-interested, by extension, undeserving.

Regarding tactics of imprisonment, De Genova (2021) argues that the regimes of waiting exploit the resistance of human subjects and aim to reduce them to pure objects (p.194), depriving them of their autonomous subjectivities. The diverse approaches of "active waiting" and its deployment as a hierarchical criterion are used for that. Beyond feelings of "stuckness" that the open-ended waiting can provoke, the axis active good citizen versus active unlawful mover illustrates the state's power. Apart from the state's power, it shows how the political order is challenged in spaces where the temporal autonomy is unequally distributed (Bendixsen & Eriksen, 2018).

6.3 Helping hands as an encounter in navigation

As aforementioned in chapter 2 and 5, since the 2015-2016 long summer of migration in Greece (Oikonomakis, 2018), a multitude of Greek and international actors; volunteers, activists, locals, doctors, international and local NGO personnel, humanitarian professionals (Papataxiarchis, 2016) have composed the "rescue branch" and became the "helping hands" for people arriving on the Greek islands and mainland. For this reason, often, these actors constitute salient players in movers' trajectories and are parts of their social networks. Concerning the "rescue branch", as already mentioned in the previous chapter, the changing configurations of facilitation/control and care/discipline influence movers' trajectories and, sometimes, confirm the existing exercising of power relations (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2020). Similarly, Hernández-León (2012) argues that the "rescue industry" can facilitate mobility, but many actors and organizations of the industry are active in duties of control such as identification and deportation procedures. That makes the "rescue industry" be between facilitation and control.

From my perspective, it is particularly important to examine movers' experience of the "rescue industry" to gain valuable insights into their investment strategies in a broader web of relationships which can be useful in the short or long term

(Schapendonk, 2015). For this reason, this section dives into the multiplicity of movers' experiences and perceptions regarding being connected to the "helping hands". That helps us extend our knowledge of the variable form of agency that the "rescue branch" represents. As aforementioned, the intertwining of care and control is considered as inherent to hospitality practices in the daily governance of people on the move (Isleyen, 2018; Kalir & Wissink, 2015). That calls for an exploration of movers' experience concerning the "rescue branch" to shed light on the uneven and multifaceted operation of power, social relations, and emergent geographies of these relations (Isleyen, 2018, p. 854). Considering the dynamic character of movers' trajectories, e.g., possible blockages, re-orientation, unexpected events, being connected to the "rescue branch," and obtaining the respective social capital to achieve personal objectives involves social negotiation.

Feeling grateful

"..I feel very grateful to NGOs such as Caritas, Doctors of the World, Greek Council of the Refugees, ECHO... Most of the organizations here in Greece are part of solidarity...Red Cross, Caritas, Generation 2.0 are helping... They have counselors and create opportunities for all people..."
(Kazem, mover)

"..I started from Khora, and I feel so grateful about Khora...it was a new door for me, like having a big community around myself, different people, international people from all different backgrounds; I got to know how to communicate with people.. actually, to be honest, Khora means a lot to me because nowadays the opportunities that I have, are because I started from Khora, nice community, they support and help people, I am also happy that I am able myself to help people as a refugee, within each community, within each NGOs, there are lots of problem[s] and also I mean inside Khora there are problems but anyway I really like it, I found it really helpful, really supportive and I would like to continue working with Khora because each day I get to know a different person, nowadays it goes deeply to different cultures, different behaviors, so I mean that all of them are kind of advantage that I get to from being inside of Khora; otherwise I would not [be] able to do much.."
(Fahrad, mover)

The statements provided by Kazem and Fahrad illustrate their positive stance toward helping hands. Their accounts are in agreement with the social expectation of "being grateful" for receiving support (Kalir & Wissink, 2015). For Kazem, as for many people on the move, being connected to NGOs is treated as a form of agency to create a network of people and livelihoods. In our discussion, Kazem referred many times to

how useful are for him the English and the employment support classes that he attends. He argued that through his connections with some NGOs, he found a part-time job as a floater at a shop and occasionally works as an interpreter in accompaniments to public services.

Similarly, Fahrad, due to his involvement in Khora Kitchen and his excellent level of English, is used to occasionally working as a translator at KAST. He found another job in a collaborative part of Khora, a mobile library. As aforementioned in chapter 4, he encountered bureaucratic obstacles in accessing the Greek asylum system. When finally, he got his appointment for registration through his friends from Khora, he found a lawyer who prepared and informed him about every aspect of the procedure. By late July 2021, he received his white card. He became able to continue his studies as he wanted and continues working at the mobile library through which he financially supports his family in Afghanistan.

Fahrad's and Kazem's involvement in the "rescue branch" evokes what Giudici (2021) calls as "mantra of active citizenship" and possibly implies notions of deservingness. Both of them display an active, willing, thankful, and dutiful attitude which is in harmony with the neo-liberalization of social care and the formation of a new "responsible citizen" (Rozakou, 2016 a, p.82). Behaving like a "responsible subject" combined with their proactive attitude (Schapendonk, 2015, p.815) has facilitated their connection to the "helping hands" and their access to resources needed for additional goals (Cranston et al., 2018), such as job opportunities, interview preparation, and a vast network of compatriots, international friends, and every kind of contact which would be useful for mobilizing social capital. Nevertheless, it is significant to consider the efforts needed to accumulate social capital through these social ties, what Pathirage & Collyer (2011) call "network work" and the unexpected outcome stemming from them.

Being skeptical

"It's like a building NGOs and military work together in the same building...they say...we have the ways to help you...You need to be fake, be grateful to them, to get the least support..."
(Ali, mover)

"...Some organizations are really working from their hearts, some organizations are really working for their budget, and this is [a] huge problem. I f[ou]nd it in Greece... I know some organization[s]... without saying their names because...I helped them with transferring the food and the staff for the refugee... they were keeping them in their place and then the second day we d[idn]t know where is it, or they sold it, or they gave it to the people they wanted it. I mean there is no fairness in some

organization[s] with the treating the refugee in [a]good way or give to everybody what he has to get... Many organizations get rich because of the refugee because they g[e]t money money money money, money from Europe or from business[e]n or they [say] that they want to do something for the refugee and just they show a few pictures and that's it. But what [do] the refugees[s] get? Nothing...Some organizations c[o]me and they give food...they make a video, they make a big channel... but why? Because [i]f you want to give food because you want to give food... let these people eat, that's it... If you want to make... yourself a star or something like this... you make these people feel bad ...So I am the good guy giving food to these people...this is not nice.

Some organization[s]... they did [it].That's...a fact..."

(Ahman, mover)

Ali and Ahman express their suspicion toward NGOs' practices in Greece. In our discussion, Ali expressed his distrust of big civil society organizations active in Greece with multiple examples. He referred to the unacceptable living conditions in shelters and movers' exploitation through volunteering practices by local and international NGOs. Ali argued that although he had been offered job positions in civil society organizations, he had rejected them because he disagrees with their approaches. Since his arrival in Greece, he had multiple encounters with NGOs, which provoked his aversion to their practices. In the meantime, he had been actively involved in migrant solidarity circles, and he became a founding member of a migrant community located in Athens. Concerning conventional forms of care, Ali referred to how movers are expected to show gratitude; otherwise, they run the risk of being considered "ungrateful subjects" (Kalir & Wissink, 2015) and not eligible for support. Additionally, with this statement, he seemed to understand NGOs as components of the process of humanitarianisation and militarization to manage and discipline migration through technocratic expertise (Cuttita, 2020).

Similarly, Ahman's experience with NGOs over his time in the country gave him a cynical view of how money moves from hand to hand concerning refugee support (Grewal, 2021). He argued that practically NGOs do not advocate for any agenda that would benefit the movers. He referred to the inappropriate practices of organizations and the humiliation that movers can encounter during being filmed or their pictures are taken due to fundraising reasons. That implies the enforcement of what the "service provider" deems as satisfactory (Lau, 2019). Additionally, he criticized the representations of the "givers" as "rescuers and good guys". A parallel to colonial principles of guardianship (Manzo, 2008) is unavoidable. As some of my informants, Ahman referred to the infantilization process (Aru, 2021; Artero & Fontanari, 2021) that movers are subjected to. That parent-child metaphor implies that movers require guidance in the same way that minors need guidance from their parents (Manzo, 2008, p.650). That can lead movers to undergo a powerlessness process that they internalize, causing them to feel reduced from an adult to a baby (Artero & Fontanari, 2021, p. 641), which deprives them of the autonomy of having a normal adult life

(Aru, 2021). Ahman also stressed other incidents that exacerbated his distrust of NGOs, e.g., not receiving the appropriate information from an NGO lawyer, feeling that employees capitalize on movers' worries and give them wrong information, as they do not perceive them as equals.

Ali's and Ahman's experiences show that a lack of the expected support deteriorated their relations to specific "helping hands" and pointed to the misrecognition of the expected social capital (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011). Their dissatisfaction with specific "helping hands" possibly functioned as a motivation to cultivate new ones or invest in more beneficial networks, such as Ahman's involvement in the football clubs and teams, aforementioned at the beginning of chapter 6, and Ali's involvement in the migrant solidarity movement.

During my fieldwork, I met many movers who were connected or had cooperated in the past with multiple NGOs, Greek, and internationals, bigger and smaller. Their interaction with the "rescue branch" is treated as a way to access material assistance, legal representation for detained movers, important information, emotional support, and creation of new networks (Ghandour-Demiri, 2020; Wissink et al., 2013). The statements above confirm that the inconsistent and opposing logics in providing care and order can be "happily married" (Isleyen, 2018, p.852). Concerning the "rescue branch", it is important to consider the multidimensional and transformative social, economic, and political nexus with diverse actors (Hernández-León, 2012), which make the relationships within it fluid and variable. Fhrad's, Kazem's, Ali's, and Ahman's network work confirms that movers are not merely passive recipients of care but actively try to find the appropriate help to achieve their priorities and objectives in a constantly changing environment (D'Angelo, 2019, p.3). However, the benefits are not by any means guaranteed and require continual negotiation to gain the maximum profits (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011, p. 322). Apart from the efforts needed to maintain social ties and the attached social capital, due to the changing nature of relationships like many authors (Schapendonk, 2015; Pathirage & Collyer, 2011; Wissink et al., 2020; Achilli & Abu Samra, 2021), I argue that it is significant to consider the negative feedback loops within them. Due to their fluidity, social relationships can be intensified, declined, and disappear. According to Schapendonk (2015), networking depends on the performance and timing of connectivity (p.818). Considering that, the relational dimension of networking can help us think more about the non-rational aspects of migration, such as pure luck, unexpected opportunities, and critical events (Schapendonk, 2015).

6.4 Concluding remarks

My goal in this chapter was to answer my third sub-question: “*How is the layered deservingness lived and experienced by movers in Greece?*” By examining movers’ experiences concerning the Greek asylum bureaucracy, the state of limbo, and the interaction with the “helping hands”, we have seen that luck is a fundamental element from the outset of movers’ experience (Belloni, 2016; Schapendonk, 2020).

According to Belloni (2016), studies that have looked at gambling from a psycho-social perspective underline the role of social learning (p.112). So, in her research concerning Eritrean refugees in Italy, she argues that social learning and pressure are crucial factors in movers’ decision-making (p.112). Similarly, I argue, based on the accounts of my informants, despite and due to the bureaucratic praxes obstructing movers to asylum (Artero & Fontanari, 2021), navigation in a semi-legal context encourages “gambling practices” and social negotiation. Some of them tried their luck to leave Greece by their means, while others invested in their networks and abandoned the asylum procedure. Others tried to adopt particular performativities, such as the “dutiful asylum seeker” (Giudici, 2021), to achieve their objectives, and other persons tried to bribe state and non-state actors to accelerate their case. Understanding movers as gamblers help us to consider their tactics beyond simplistic models that assume that they are not well-informed and passive victims (Belloni, 2016; Fontanari & Ambrossini, 2018). So, through the analogy, we can understand them as autonomous active agents who try to navigate the Greek bureaucratic, social labyrinth and build their lives by negotiating with or contesting the existing structures (Fontanari & Ambrossini, 2018, p.599).

Nevertheless, it is significant to consider that the hierarchies of deservingness and the power of migration bureaucracies can profoundly influence their trajectories. As aforementioned in chapter 6.3, people who follow the “legal” path with patience and diligence are more deserving compared to those who decide to move informally. Simultaneously, from my perspective, we have to consider how this semi-informality blurs the fixed understandings of deservingness. For example, possibly movers who have representatives or significant contacts within the “system” can maneuver easier compared to others who “fulfill the conditions of the deserving migrant typically”.

The interaction with the “rescue industry” as part of many movers’ navigational tactics is again a matter of luck, as the diverse experiences of Fahrads, Kazem, Ahman and Ali confirmed. Although their emotions and perceptions evoked concerning the “helping hands” highly differ, there is one common feature in their navigation; all of them work actively to maintain the benefits inherent in their social relations (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011, p.316). In line with D’Angelo (2019), I argue that as movement through time and space is fluid, so, the relative social ties are constantly under construction and re-construction, by extension, that debunks the simplistic understandings of migration journey as a linear process (Schapendonk et al., 2020; Ryan & Dahinden, 2020; Bilecen & Lubbers, 2019).

To conclude, a range of public and private actors with diverse interests are involved in movers' trajectories, which engenders a complex process in which movers' aspirations interact with the multiple power structures, what Fontanari & Ambrossini (2018) call as migration "battleground" (p.589). In the "battleground", the distinction between legality/ illegality, friends/ enemies, care/discipline is very blurred. That makes it necessary to bring at the very center the individual, social and relational dimensions (D'Angelo, 2019) in a field that is constantly under change.

Chapter 7 | Conclusion

The goal of this study was to bring valuable insights into movers' deservingness in the Greek context. I intended to examine how deservingness is articulated through humanitarian and solidarity practices to gain a deeper understanding of how people on the move approach the construction of their deservingness and, by extension, how it affects movers' trajectories and navigation. I conducted a single-sited ethnography in the city of Athens, whereby through my involvement in the grassroots initiative of Khora Community Center, I had the opportunity to observe and gain a first-hand experience of movers' deservingness and their pains, pleasures, and unexpected encounters during their navigation. The cornerstone of this study is the non-linearity of migration processes and regards it as important to examine what happens "in-between" (Schapendonk, van Liempt & Spierings, 2015). For many of my informants, Greece is not treated as their final destination, but the construction of their deservingness in the specific context can be a determinant for their pathways.

On the other hand, it is important not to underestimate how the gap between "real" and "official rules" (Tuckett, 2015) embedded in the Greek asylum bureaucracy, as well as the existence of significant social networks, helping hands, and (un) expected encounters (Schapendonk, 2018) allow for flexibility but also evolve risks to "losing out" (Tuckett, 2015). That fluidity in migration processes illustrates that movers' deservingness is not a fixed process.

To answer my research question - *"How is deservingness of movers enacted by the humanitarian practices and solidarity practices in Greece, and how do they perceive these practices?"* - I intended to include the "voices" of diverse actors involved in movers' encounters and by extension in their deservingness. With my particular approach to contrast and combine insights, I tried to unpack how movers' deservingness unfolds in diverse spaces whereby actors coming from different ideological angles and sometimes with conflicting interests come together, interact, can make strange alliances, and produce similar attitudes and approaches (chapter 4, 5). Additionally, I aimed at illustrating how people on the move perceive the role of these actors and institutions in their pathways as well as the construction of their deservingness. Combined with that, considering that movers operate as active agents influenced by the social aspect, I intended to examine movers' calculations of the tradeoff between benefits and risks (Belloni, 2016, p.115) during their navigation (chapter 6).

Chapter 4 discussed how deservingness is constructed in the Greek asylum procedure. As a starting point, the chapter took the culture of disbelief embedded in the asylum procedure. Furthermore, it focused on how the notions of nationality and vulnerability are deployed as techniques to legitimize that tendency of distrust and the relevant

stereotypical hierarchies. In the Greek context, especially since 2016, the temporality of control has followed a swift pace in procedures (Tazzioli, 2017) which “encourages” and normalizes the categorizations of people on the move. It is important to consider that the sorting of movers legitimizes their racialized representation. Determining individuals’ deservingness superficially in terms of “genuine refugees” and “bogus economic migrants” has real-world implications on their pathways (Goodman, Sirriyeh & McMahon, 2017) and restricts our knowledge concerning global mobility. From my perspective, these cookie-cutter approaches, politics of numbers, and ambiguity of procedures are utilized to hinder and discipline unruly, autonomous mobility and illustrate what Tazzioli (2017) calls “containment through mobility” (p.2). Understanding “containment” beyond harsh lines of inclusion and exclusion allows us to realize that the Greek and the EU “strategy” in that case is not to keep movers immobile. Instead, it involves forms of economic exploitation and incorporation, which is achieved by keeping people constantly on the move (Tazzioli, 2017).

In chapter 5, I discussed deservingness in the practices of the so-called “rescue industry” to illustrate the complex web of practices of assistance and deterrence (Gerand & Weber, 2019). In the “rescue branch” as in the “migration industry” overall, the miscellaneous actors involved take overlapping roles and responsibilities between care and control. Therefore, it is difficult to know exactly who is responsible in what and how (Eule et al., 2019, p.191). Concerning that, it is essential to understand that the chaotic character of the “rescue branch” and the blurring responsibilities often enables rather than constraints governance (Eule et al., 2019, p.195). In my analysis, I included practices unwrapped in spaces of professional humanitarianism and solidarity. Although between humanitarianism and solidarity practices, there are some fundamental differences concerning intentions, approaches, and relationships with people on the move, during my fieldwork, I realized that certain moralities can be detected both in conventional and alternative forms of care. Constructing deservingness through an amalgam of vulnerability, gratitude, diligence confirmed that movers are expected to behave in a specific manner.

For most of my informants, humanitarianism is related to a hierarchical, technocratic, and depoliticized approach to vulnerability and migration (Cuttitta, 2020, p.6), while solidarity is linked to horizontality and reciprocity. Nevertheless, due to performances of gratitude and emotional attachments, spaces of solidarity are not unaffected by internal control. The findings regarding deservingness through humanitarian and solidarity practices confirm that deservingness obtains diverse configurations based on the context but also indicate that actors with contradicting aspirations can produce similar attitudes.

Chapter 6 focused exclusively on movers’ experience concerning their deservingness in the Greek context. Special attention was given to the arbitrariness, opaqueness, and semi-legality of the Greek Asylum bureaucracy to illustrate how being granted asylum has been converted into a matter of luck. As aforementioned, this ambiguity in

practices allows for flexibility but involves unexpected outcomes. Due to that, a successful outcome for many movers is approached as winning a “jackpot” (Belloni, 2016). In movers’ experience of precarity, waiting is a constitutive element. In this study, waiting is approached as a transformative process that involves practices of production and destruction of human will and agency, desire (Biren & Biren, 2021, p.832), and unexpected events, which are involved and produce movers’ (un)deservingness. Regarding movers’ encounters in the state of precarity, many people interact with the “rescue branch”. By illustrating diverse experiences concerning being connected to the “helping hands”, I intended to show the blurriness between care and control existing in the practices of the “rescue industry” as well as movers’ investment strategies and efforts needed to maintain the respective social capital stemming from these ties. The unexpectedness in every aspect of their navigation confirms that their deservingness is fluid too and remains a constitutive part of their mobility’s gambling process.

7.1 Reflection and recommendation for future research

This section aims to provide possible recommendations for future research related to the approaches followed in this study. Firstly, I am about to reflect on possible weaknesses of my research as well as on what is recommended to be done differently while conducting a similar study. Afterward, I intend to raise questions linked to the basic angles of my study that, from my perspective, deserve further exploration in future research.

Reflection

As mentioned in chapter 3, fieldwork is a “learning process” that comes with mistakes, delayed realizations, unexpected events, and outcomes. Having spent roughly four months on the field, I realized that spending more time possibly could bring more reliable results, as I would have the opportunity to reflect more extensively on possible observations, and maybe my informants would feel more comfortable expressing themselves. Additionally, conducting a single-sited ethnography enabled me to study the multi-sited context regarding movers’ deservingness in Athens effectively, but “deprived” me of having a first-hand experience of what is happening in the Greek islands, border zones, other Greek cities and countries, which are involved in my informants’ pathways. Furthermore, concerning the validity, if I were about to re-conduct my research, I would include more female movers, as I had conversations only with 2 out of 11 movers that participated in my study. Possibly, a better balance in the distribution of my interlocutors would bring more valid outcomes. Combined with that, in my study, I did not take into account socio-economic features, such as age, education, marital and

economic status of my informants. From my perspective, it is important to consider them during research to some extent. For example, from my experience, many young movers approach their journey as a “gambling game” and are constantly mobile, as aforementioned, while in a few encounters that I had with older people at Khora Kitchen, they were used to telling that they want stability in their lives.

Recommendation for future research

As aforementioned, deservingness can obtain diverse configurations. The importance attributed to the suffering subject is converted into a “duty” to follow the community of value. From my perspective, the emerging figure of the deserving mover as dutiful, diligent, hard-working, involved in volunteering is worth further attention, especially in the current context of “anxious politics” (de Koning & Modest, 2017) and the economic downturn in Greece, Europe as well. Specifically, movers’ access to asylum has been restricted significantly, which, combined with the promotion of performance-based deservingness, crystallizes the erosion of asylum rights and the imposition of normative subjectivities through inherently paternalistic workfare schemes (Guidici, 2021, p.42). In particular, the figure of the “dutiful, willing to contribute at any cost” is in harmony with the neoliberal production of subjectivities. That also implies the strategies of governing populations, which are deployed to reproduce the existing structural inequalities and racial classifications (Guidici, 2021). Examining movers’ deservingness by linking it to their precarious labor can bring significant insights into how the migration and humanitarian regime capitalize upon their subjectivities (Spathopoulou, Kallio & Hakli, 2021). Exploring exploitative forms of governing in the practices of the “Humanitarian Industrial Complex” (Dadusc & Mudu, 2020) can be particularly interesting and bring valuable findings concerning insecure positions of movers occupied as interpreters, cultural mediators (Spathopoulou et al., 2021), employees and volunteers as well as can contribute deeper to the “care and control” debate.

Additionally, focusing on the connection between deservingness and neoliberal formation of subjectivities can contribute further to de-migranticizing research. Specifically, mirroring the neoliberal subjectivities of racialized movers and citizens with non-racialized ones can create significant openings for discussing the positioning and categorizing of different types of movers and citizens. Through that, my intention is not to suggest an equalization of middle-class problems with the problems of racialized individuals (Schapendonk, 2017).

Nevertheless, from my perspective, that mirroring can lead to profound insights concerning the politicization and temporality of mobility, citizenship, and by extension, deservingness, and how they are deployed as tools of differentiation. Focusing on the similarities would enable us to extend our knowledge beyond clear-

cut binary divisions and typological fixities, which significantly restrict our understanding of human movement (Schapendonk et al., 2015).

7.2. Recommendations for future policy

Taking as a starting point the problematic legal framework and perception regarding the status of being an economic migrant in Greece, in this section, I aim to provide possible recommendations for future policy-making. My main argument here is the consolidation, upgrade, and recognition of the rights of being an economic migrant. From my point of view, creating a protective legal framework beyond asylum procedures can contribute to de-demonizing the figure of the economic migrants and can enable us to extend our understanding beyond the binary divisions such as “genuine refugees” versus “bogus economic migrants”. Combined with that, this can also be linked to the attempt of “de-migraticizing”, as creating a framework of recognition and protection can make us reflect and realize the “mirroring” aforementioned, between racialized and non-racialized movers. From my perspective, understanding that “mirroring” is particularly important for the Greek context, as, throughout the decades, thousands of Greeks have decided to migrate to countries of the Global North exclusively due to financial reasons.

In theory, a legal framework regulating entry, residence, and employment provides an “opportunity” for the geographical and socio-economic mobility of movers in Greece (Maroukis, 2013). Nevertheless, the “familistic welfare capitalism” model (Maroukis, 2013) that characterizes the country has encouraged largely informal employment arrangements which beyond the precarious labor produce multiple kinds of precarity. For example, movers’ right to legal residence and free movement is connected to their evidence of formal employment (Maroukis, 2013). Similarly, according to Triantafyllidou et al. (2013), movers coming to Greece cannot legally work, and if they manage to legalize their status, they are facing difficulties in keeping a regular job so that they fulfill the conditions of issuing and renewing their residence permit (p. 26).

It is known that deliberate illegality and precarity remain the main ingredients of the Greek migration management model (Triantafyllidou et al., 2013, p.34). Undoubtedly, cheap and undeclared labor, combined with illegalized or semi-legal status, is a convenient solution to benefit the “welfare regimes” and control, govern and deport movers (Cholezas & Tsakoglou, 2008). Although it would be naïve to consider that creating a new legal framework for economic migration would be intact of “loopholes” of exploitation and discrimination, it could be a first step in restricting processes of exclusion and inclusion (Dahinden, 2010a, p. 40) and following a more open mobility policy. Additionally, that could bring justice apart from newcomers to people who arrived in Greece in the 1990s and are considered economic migrants. For many of them, access to naturalization procedures as well as access to citizenship for

their offspring born in Greece were denied (Cavounidis, 2018) and, after more than 30 years, are still denied.

Creating a protective framework that approaches mobility beyond narrow narratives of victimization and demonization can lead to the realization that people on the move are transnational actors who can be connected to different cultural and social systems across international borders (Dahinden, 2010b), in the same way with EU movers. In societal terms, that realization can challenge our consolidated vocabulary and categorizations such as “ex-pats” and “economic migrants”, whereby the term of “ex-pat” is mainly linked to privileged EU-movers and signifies a class marker compared to the “migrant” who in the public discourse has been framed as desperate, poor and low-skilled (Schapendonk, 2017). Understanding that different terminology is utilized to describe the same social processes (Schapendonk et al., 2015) can enable us to comprehend how highly racialized lines are produced. For example, from my perspective, the mobility of a high-/low-skilled Greek mover, in terms of motivations, should not be treated as highly diverse compared to a high-/low-skilled non-EU mover. In both cases, mobility can be an economic strategy. With focusing on the similarities, my aim is not to underestimate or romanticize the pains, struggles, and traumas of racialized movers, which can be constitutive elements of the journey. Nevertheless, creating a legal framework that focuses on the bright side, beyond the necessitation of vulnerability, desperation, and victimization, on the one hand, and hostility, securitization, and politics of numbers on the other, can change the stereotypical understanding of mobility in policy-making. Approaching mobility as the physical movement of individuals in transnational space (Dahinden, 2010a, b) can contribute to transformative effects related to societal issues, belonging, and citizenship.

7.3 Concluding remarks

To sum up, I agree with Dahinden’s (2016) statement:

This migration apparatus, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble of discourses, institutions, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, emerged at the same time as the nation-state emerged and was entangled with it: the idea of migrants as different from citizens and the perceived need for nation-states to manage this difference were institutionalized (p. 2209).

In line with that, I regard that a reorientation of the unit of analysis both in societal and scientific terms would make it possible to transcend the normative distinctions between migrants and non-migrants. Moving away from treating migrants as the unit

of analysis and focusing on the whole population in interpreting social processes would enable us to understand how specific categories of people on the move, despite their similarities with the “whole” are “migranticized” through state-led bureaucracies and consolidated expectations (Schapendonk, 2020) which produce and normalize the hierarchies of deservingness discussed in this study. The use of bureaucratic labels as pre-given signifiers of difference (Schapendonk, 2020), policies of deterrence and securitization, practices of integration and assimilation, some aspects of the “welcome culture” and care reproduce this exceptionality and ignore how movers, as transnational actors, in the same way as many non-racialized movers, approach their mobility as a continuation of gambling game, started in their home country (Belloni, 2016, p. 110). Homogenizing and undermining movers’ experience imposes a narrow understanding of their mobility, which ignores the powerful and unexpected aspects, as Ali confirms:

“...When I arrived in Greece, a Greek friend told me: “Welcome Ali,” and I told him: “Okay, thank you, but do not say “welcome” again, here we are equal... he asked me about Syria and how I survived... I told him: “I am thirsty for more experiences”... I see myself as an Athenian believing in active citizenship with Syrian background... Believe me, I am happy when people are happy with me being here, but I am getting even happier when they are not...” (Ali, mover)

Appendix I

Overview of my interlocutors

Name	Date of the interview	How the person is involved	Recording	Location
Fahrad	30/6/2021	Mover	No	Athens (Greece)
Aila	30/6/2021	Researcher	No	Athens (Greece)
Ali	19/7/2021	Mover	No	Athens (Greece)
Allison	6/8/2021	Khora Volunteer	Yes	Athens (Greece)
Ashraf	19/7/2021	mover	No	Athens (Greece)
Anna	13/7/2021	Former employee at an NGO	Yes	online
Behzoud	31/7/2021	Mover	Yes	Athens (Greece)
Brittany	2/7/2021	Khora-KAST Volunteer	Yes	Athens (Greece)
Tommy	7/7/2021	caretaker at an NGO	Yes	Athens (Greece)
Jenny	1/7/2021	KAST Administrator	Yes	Athens (Greece)
Dorothy	21/7/2021	Khora-KAST Volunteer	Yes	Athens (Greece)
Emily	8/7/2021	Lawyer at an NGO-Khora-KAST volunteer	Yes	Athens (Greece)
Helen	18/8/2021	Psychologist at an NGO	Yes	online
Elina	23/5/2021	Advocacy officer of an NGO	Yes	online
Jorgina	26/7/2021	Former employee at IOM and EASO	Yes	online
David	2/8/2021	Mover	No	Athens (Greece)
Ahman	17/8/2021	Mover	Yes	online
Elena	15/7/2021	Ph.D. candidate & editor	Yes	online
Kazem	22/7/2021	Mover	No	Athens (Greece)
Achyut	3/8/2021	Mover	No	Athens (Greece)
Kostantinos	18/8/2021	NGO employee	Yes	online
Lefteris	22/6/2021	Advocacy representative of an NGO	Yes	online
Lucia	5/8/2021	Khora-KAST Volunteer	No	online
Hussein	written	Mover	No	written
Maria	27/7/2021	Nurse at an NGO	Yes	online
Maryam	4/8/2021	Mover	No	online
Panos	7/7/2021	Caretaker at an NGO	Yes	online
Khalid	6/8/2021	Mover	Yes	Athens (Greece)
Tonia	28/6/2021	Lawyer at an NGO	Yes	online
Thomas	7/7/2021	Advocacy officer of an NGO	Yes	online
Stacey	20/4/2021	NGO representative	Yes	online
Mary	18/8/2021	Asylum caseworker	Yes	Heraklion (Greece)
Deena	22/8/2021	Mover	Yes	online

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