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Annelie Boeren

Refugees' Experiences in Sites of Prolonged Displacement, Liminality and Exception

A Case Study of the Diavata Refugee Camp in Northern Greece

EMA, The European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation

ANNELIE BOEREN

REFUGEES' EXPERIENCES IN SITES OF PROLONGED DISPLACEMENT, LIMINALITY AND EXCEPTION: A CASE STUDY OF THE DIAVATA REFUGEE CAMP IN NORTHERN GREECE

FOREWORD

The European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) is a one-year intensive programme launched in 1997 as a joint initiative of universities in all EU Member States with support from the European Commission. Based on an action- and policy-oriented approach to learning, it combines legal, political, historical, anthropological and philosophical perspectives on the study of human rights and democracy with targeted skills-building activities. The aim from the outset was to prepare young professionals to respond to the requirements and challenges of work in international organisations, field operations, governmental and non-governmental bodies, and academia. As a measure of its success, EMA has served as a model of inspiration for the establishment of six other EU-sponsored regional master's programmes in the area of human rights and democratisation in different parts of the world. Today these programmes cooperate closely in the framework of the Global Campus of Human Rights, which is based in Venice, Italy.

Up to 90 students are admitted to the EMA programme each year. During the first semester in Venice, they have the opportunity to meet and learn from leading academics, experts and representatives of international and non-governmental organisations. During the second semester, they relocate to one of the 42 participating universities to follow additional courses in an area of specialisation of their own choice and to conduct research under the supervision of the resident EMA Director or other academic staff. After successfully passing assessments and completing a master's thesis, students are awarded the European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation, which is jointly conferred by a group of EMA universities.

Each year the EMA Council of Directors selects five theses, which stand out not only for their formal academic qualities but also for the originality of topic, innovative character of methodology and approach, potential usefulness in raising awareness about neglected issues, and capacity for contributing to the promotion of the values underlying human rights and democracy.

The EMA Awarded Theses of the academic year 2020/2021 are:

• Boatright, Katie, *Re-imagining Truth and Redress: Racial Injustice against African Americans in the United States and the Current Push for Transitional Justice.* Supervisor: Stephan Parmentier, KU Leuven.

• Boeren, Annelie, *Refugees' Experiences in Sites of Prolonged Displacement, Liminality, and Exception: A Case Study of the Diavata Refugee Camp in Northern Greece.* Supervisor: Georgios Agelopoulos, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

• Heinrici, Agnes, *Handle with Care. How to Improve Access to Healthcare for Deaf People in a Pandemic.* Supervisors: Kalliope Agapiou-Josephides, Aristotelis Constantinides, University of Cyprus.

• Lombardi, Federica, *From Myanmar to The Hague. A Feminist Perspective on the Search for Gender Justice by Rohingya Women before the International Criminal Court.* Supervisor: Dolores Morondo Taramundi, University of Deusto, Bilbao.

• McCall Magan, Ríon, *Idir Eatarthu is Achrann. The Framing of Women's Agency in Northern Ireland's Counterterrorism Legislative Discourse during the Troubles (1968-1998).* Supervisor: Martin Kahl, University of Hamburg.

The selected theses demonstrate the breadth, depth and reach of the EMA programme and the passion and talent of its students. We are particularly proud of EMA's 2020/21 students: as teachers and students across the world can testify, the COVID-19 pandemic brought many different challenges for teaching and learning. It is fair to say that our students researched and wrote their theses in turbulent times. On behalf of the Governing Bodies of EMA and of all participating universities, we applaud and congratulate them.

Prof. Manfred NOWAK
Global Campus Secretary General

Prof. Thérèse MURPHY
EMA Chairperson

Dr Orla Ní Cheallacháin
EMA Programme Director

This publication includes the thesis *Refugees' Experiences in Sites of Prolonged Displacement, Liminality, and Exception: A Case Study of the Diavata Refugee Camp in Northern Greece* written by Annelie Boeren and supervised by Georgios Agelopoulos, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

BIOGRAPHY

Annelie Boeren has been interested in refugees' rights since her years at the United World College in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, when one million people crossed the Western Balkan route to enter the EU. During her BA in World Politics at Leiden University College in The Hague, she volunteered by teaching young refugees and researched the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. As part of the EMA in Human Rights and Democratisation, she moved to Greece to understand and document the situation of those stuck in refugee camps in Europe.

ABSTRACT

Many EU countries, including Greece, set up refugee camps to temporarily accommodate the migrants and refugees that arrived during the 2015-2016 reception crisis. Although they were created as temporary solutions, over the years many refugee camps consolidated into prolonged sites of displacement, which until today continue to accommodate families and individuals under pressing circumstances. Based on the case study of the Diavata camp, the thesis examines how the residents of a refugee camp in mainland Greece experience times of exacerbated exclusion. Drawing on qualitative research methods in the fields of sociocultural anthropology and political science, the methodology consists of fieldwork (ie participant observation and informal interviews), in-depth interviews with key informants and analysis of reports. Utilising a grounded theory approach, the thesis conceptualises the refugees' experiences in the Diavata camp as processes of prolonged displacement, liminality and exception. First, it discusses the Diavata refugee camp as a site of multi-layered exclusion through its remote location, enclosed architecture and discriminatory Covid-19 restrictions. Second, it examines the refugees' experiences of living in liminality, by scrutinising the co-existing spaces of 'exception' and 'belonging' in the Diavata camp and the 'Casa Base' safe space next door. Third, it discusses the advent of the new, three-metre high concrete wall and how this makes the Diavata camp resemble an occupied enclave. Overall, the relevance this gives to the thesis, from a human rights perspective, is the documentation and creation of a counter-narrative to both the hegemonic societal discourse and policy practice of exclusion. This narrative highlights the biopolitics of 'care and control' as a dominant axis of refugee politics in Greece and the EU.

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I would also like to extend my gratitude to the UNESCO Chair on Education for Human Rights, Democracy and Peace for hosting us at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The UNESCO Chair team took great care during our time in Greece. In particular, I want to thank Director Prof Despoina Klavanidou and the members of the Scientific Committee; Assistant Prof Anastasia Kesidou and Assistant Prof Anna Maria Konsta. Equally, Ms Stella Dimitriadou was of invaluable support throughout the semester in Thessaloniki.

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I would like to thank Chris and Michael for supporting the fieldwork through kindness towards strangers, patience during my puzzling and the sharing of recollections – in addition to the Greek interpretations. Similarly, I want to thank Rafif for our trips to the Diavata camp area and for interpreting Arabic and Turkish conversations. She is a great communicator, who made everyone feel comfortable and always said the right things at the right time. As a Syrian and a former refugee herself, she truly opened the hearts of many people we met.

Last but not least, many friends were of great support along the way, whether they were in Greece, the Netherlands or elsewhere. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the valuable feedback I received from Aimée, Andrea and Loes, who proofread my thesis. Moreover, I am very grateful for the encouragement I received from family in the Netherlands. Here, I want to thank my parents as well as my sister for always listening to my adventures and guiding me in future ones.

This thesis is dedicated to those living in liminality,
and in particular, the residents of the Diavata refugee camp.
May there be a positive end to the endless waiting soon, *inshallah*.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARSIS	Association for the Social Support of Youth
ASB	Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund
EU	European Union
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
QRT	Quick Response Team
RIS	Reception and Identification Service
RSA	Refugee Support Aegean
RTI	Refugee Trauma Initiative
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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1.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2015, more than a million people sought their way into the European Union (EU), many of whom fled their countries because of conflict, violence, persecution and human rights violations.[1] The scale of migration flows combined with the lack of a cohesive EU response posed significant challenges for asylum systems and reception facilities in many EU countries, particularly in the so-called hotspots. Refugee camps were set up as temporary solutions to manage the influx of migrants and refugees. After the closing of the Balkan route in April 2016, the way for migrants and refugees to reach Western Europe was cut off, leaving many stuck in the hitherto transit country Greece. To decongest the makeshift camp in Idomeni (a small Greek village near the North Macedonian border) that consequently arose and to temporarily accommodate newcomers, 30 refugee camps were hastily set up in mainland Greece.[2] Although they were created as temporary solutions, over the years many refugee camps consolidated into prolonged sites of displacement. As of July 2021, some of these refugee camps continue to accommodate families and individuals, although in decreasing numbers.[3] Throughout their existence, refugee camps in Greece have been reportedly flagged for their overcrowded and inhumane conditions, without many prospects of improvement.[4] Accordingly, the pressing circumstances and difficult

[1] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Over One Million Sea Arrivals Reach Europe in 2015' (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 30 December 2015) <https://unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/12/5683d0b56/million-sea-arrivals-reach-europe-2015.html> accessed 18 June 2021.

[2] Anna Papoutsi and others, 'The EC Hotspot Approach in Greece: Creating Liminal EU Territory' (2019) 45 Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 2200.

[3] George Kandylis, 'Accommodation as Displacement: Notes from Refugee Camps in Greece in 2016' (2018) 32(Special Issue 1) Journal of Refugee Studies i12, i12.

[4] Patrick Kingsley, '"Prisoners of Europe": The Everyday Humiliation of Refugees Stuck in Greece' *The Guardian* (6 September 2016) <https://theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/06/prisoners-of-europe-the-everyday-humiliation-of-refugees-stuck-in-greece-migration> accessed 5 November 2020.

living conditions which characterise the refugee camp also shape the daily life of its residents. In the academic scholarly debate and from a human rights perspective, this context prompts the examination and exploration of the phenomenon of exclusion through the lens of temporality.

This thesis examines the case study of a refugee camp in mainland Greece by focussing on the experiences of the residents living in the Diavata camp. The refugee camp is located in the industrial outskirt of the village Diavata, which is 7.5km from the city centre of Thessaloniki in northern Greece. It is the second camp established on the mainland, opening on 24 February 2016. The Diavata camp was reported to be 'one of the most overcrowded camps in mainland Greece'.[5] Throughout the years, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have reported the living conditions (including access to housing, sanitation and medical aid) in the Diavata camp to be insufficient and human rights to be compromised.[6] In this context, the focus of this thesis is on the experiences in the refugee camp, by putting the camp residents at the centre of the research. What does it mean to live in a refugee camp? To what extent are human rights protected or imagined? Based on this, the concept of 'encampment' will be scrutinised and, hence, I will explore the following research questions: How can the refugee camp be conceptualised and how does it shape the experiences of the residents in the Diavata camp? My aim is to conceptualise these experiences as processes of prolonged displacement, liminality and exception in times of exacerbated exclusion.

1.1 Methodology, limitations and contributions

To answer these questions, the research takes an interdisciplinary approach to do justice to the complex nature of refugee experiences and human rights. I draw on the fields of sociocultural anthropology and political science, which allows me to examine the refugee camp as a

[5] Refugee Support Aegean (RSA) and Pro Asyl, 'Reception Crisis in Northern Greece: Three Years of Emergency Solutions' (RSA and Pro Asyl 2019) 11 <https://rsaegean.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Reception-crisis-in-Northern-Greece-Three-years-of-emergency-solutions201905-final.pdf> accessed 12 March 2021

[6] Association for the Social Support of Youth (ARSIS), 'Improving the Greek Reception System through Site Management Support and Targeted Interventions in Long-Term Accommodation Sites' (*ARSIS - Association for the Social Support of Youth*, 2 May 2019) <http://arsis.gr/en/improving-the-greek-reception-system-through-site-management-support-and-targeted-interventions-in-long-term-accommodation-sites/> accessed 12 March 2021; ibid.

social phenomenon, cultural context and political site. Here, the thesis focusses on a single case study of the Diavata camp in northern Greece to gain a comprehensive understanding of the refugee camp dynamics and context. The thesis draws on qualitative research methods and consists of fieldwork (ie participant observation and informal interviews) in the Diavata camp area; in-depth interviews with key informants (ie former Greek state policy officers and NGO coordinators involved, respectively, in the creation and operation of the Diavata camp); and analysis of reports (ie issued by NGOs, international organisations and the Greek government). For my analysis, I utilised a grounded theory approach, taking the data as a starting point to identify common themes and develop the arguments accordingly.

It is important to point out that the methodology is largely a result of the restrictions existing in the field during this research. This includes the limited possibility to gain access to refugee camps in mainland Greece and the additional Covid-19 measures that were implemented by the Greek government throughout the conduct of this research. These conditions created difficulties, for example, in accessing the physical space of the Diavata camp area and in connecting with the residents. Nevertheless, the limitations in movement and in access to the refugee camp and its residents, which were further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighted the exclusion that became a central theme in my research. As such, it has a 'positive' contribution to this thesis in making the exclusion more evident.

The fieldwork was conducted during two months of Covid-19 measures in which NGOs were officially not allowed to enter the camp and the residents were placed in lockdown. During these two months, I also witnessed the construction of a three-metre high concrete wall around the Diavata camp, reflecting a wider set of refugee policies implemented by the Greek government. Hence, although the limited movement and access was difficult for conducting the fieldwork, the timing was very interesting and unique as it allowed me to research a distinctive time of exacerbated exclusion.

Altogether, the relevance this gives to the thesis, from a human rights perspective, is the documentation and creation of a counter-narrative to both the hegemonic societal discourse and policy practice of exclusion. Firstly, public debates regarding migrants and refugees are extremely

polarised, with distinct responses of either xenophobia or solidarity.[7] To nuance the debate, it is important to give its subject a more central place and, hence, give voice to the (often voiceless) refugees themselves. Overall, the hegemonic discourses in Greece and other EU countries portray migrants and refugees solely as a threat and security concern – for which this thesis aims to provide a counter-narrative.[8] Secondly, with a recent shift to more exclusionary policies by the liberal-conservative New Democracy government in Greece, this research became an even more urgent and relevant topic of interest as human rights are increasingly restricted. We should keep in mind that no formal mechanism for the monitoring of reception conditions in Greece has been put in place, contrary to the government's obligations.[9] However, NGOs, international organisations and journalists have taken up this role, emphasising that 'Greek authorities have not done enough' and 'government neglect puts lives at risk'.[10] This is an impetus to further explore the politics, policy and practice of exclusion.

1.2 Argument and outline of the thesis

Through the case study of the Diavata camp and its residents, this thesis conceptualises the experiences of refugees as processes of prolonged displacement, liminality and exception in an era of exacerbated exclusion. Accordingly, the thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 surveys the scholarly literature and sets the academic context of this research. Informed by my research, I decided to capitalise the concepts developed by Turner, Foucault and Agamben (ie liminality, biopolitics and exception) to analyse the context of the Diavata camp and

[7] Georgios Agelopoulos, Elina Kapetanaki and Konstantinos Kousaxidis, 'Transit Migrants in a Country Undergoing Transition: The Case of Greece' in Pirkko Pitkänen and others (eds), *Characteristics of Temporary Migration in European-Asian Transnational Social Spaces* (Springer International Publishing 2018) 124.

[8] Georgios Karyotis, 'Securitization of Migration in Greece: Process, Motives, and Implications' (2012) 6 International Political Sociology 390.

[9] Greek Council for Refugees, 'Conditions in Reception Facilities' (*Asylum in Europe: Country Report Greece*, 30 November 2020) <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/housing/conditions-reception-facilities/> accessed 5 April 2021.30 November 2020

[10] Eva Cossé, 'Greece: Island Camps Not Prepared for Covid-19' (*Human Rights Watch*, 22 April 2020) <https://hrw.org/news/2020/04/22/greece-island-camps-not-prepared-covid-19> accessed 6 April 2021.

the experiences of its residents. Chapter 3 discusses the methodological considerations and decisions made during the research process, by elaborating on the methodology, limitations and ethical considerations.

The next chapters (chapters 4, 5 and 6) are analytical in nature and aim to capture and conceptualise the experiences of the residents living in the Diavata camp. Chapter 4 discusses the Diavata camp as a site of multi-layered exclusion, based on conversations with both camp residents and the former policy officers responsible for the set-up of the camp. In particular, the remote location of the Diavata camp and the guarded fence surrounding it contribute to the isolation and marginalisation of refugees, creating experiences of temporal and spatial liminality. This, combined with the discriminatory Covid-19 restrictions imposed on refugee camps, put in practice a 'material architecture of occupation'.[11] Chapter 5 focuses on the daily life of the residents of the Diavata camp and scrutinises what it means to live in liminality. Here, the thesis argues that the Diavata camp symbolises and materialises a feeling of **exception**. On the contrary, located next to the refugee camp, the 'Casa Base' safe space for women and girls that organises daily educational and recreational activities embodies a feeling of **belonging**. The co-existence of and interaction between these contradictory spaces creates a continuous negotiation of a 'new normality' for its residents while giving women and girls the agency to navigate their position between both sites. Chapter 6 discusses the advent of a three-metre high concrete wall around the Diavata camp. It explains how the new, concrete wall completes the biopolitical project of all-encompassing control on its subjects and finalises the making of the Diavata camp into a fully occupied enclave.

Finally, the conclusion provides a summary of the residents' experiences in the Diavata camp and discusses the implications of this research from an academic and human rights perspective. It emphasises the need for continued research about the themes presented in this thesis (such as exclusion, liminality, exception, biopolitics and occupation) in the context of displacement, to better understand how policies shape refugees' lives and their enjoyment of human rights.

[11] Hanno Brankamp, '"Occupied Enclave": Policing and the Underbelly of Humanitarian Governance in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya' (2019) 71 Political Geography 67, 73.

2.

LITETARURE REVIEW

This chapter surveys relevant existing scholarly literature and sets the academic context for the research. First, it defines refugees and examines scholarly literature about protracted refugee situations and the subsequent rise of refugee camps. In this context, the chapter discusses the EU's response to the 2015-2016 arrival of migrants and refugees, where it proposes the term 'reception crisis' instead of 'refugee crisis' to describe the migration flows and its socio-political impact. This chapter shows that these two aspects combined – protracted refugee situations and the handling of the reception crisis – put many refugees in a state of liminality. Here, the concept of 'liminality' describes the refugees' socio-spatial, temporal and legal position of in-betweenness.[12] Second, the chapter examines scholarly literature that conceptualises the refugee camp. After discussing fences and walls as a means of dealing with **the other**, it presents the notion of 'biopolitics' as developed by Foucault and explains how the refugee camp functions as a site of 'care and control' and an 'enclave under occupation'.[13] Finally, drawing on Agamben, it discusses the refugee camp as a 'space of exception'.[14]

It is important to mention that the decision to capitalise these

[12] Victor Witter Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, vol 101 (Cornell UP 1967); Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti Structure* (Aldine Publishing Company 1969); Victor Witter Turner, 'Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology' (1974) 60(3) Rice Institute Pamphlet Rice University Studies 53; Victor Witter Turner, 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage' in Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster and Meredith Little, *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation* (Open Court Publishing 1994).

[13] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume I* (Robert Hurley tr, Éditions Gallimard 1976); Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture* (Jeremy Carrette ed, Routledge 1999); Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977 78* (Graham Burchell tr, St Martin's Press 2007).

[14] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford UP 1998).

concepts developed by Turner, Foucault and Agamben was made based on my research, ie fieldwork in the Diavata camp area, in-depth interviews with informants and analysis of reports. Hence, it is a decision based on a grounded theory approach, as these concepts proved useful to analyse the context of the Diavata camp and the experiences of its residents. This means that in another context (eg refugee camps in sub-Sahara Africa) a partly different approach may provide a more concrete understanding of the situation.

2.1 Protracted refugee situations and liminality

For the context of this research, it is important to examine scholarly literature that focusses on 'protracted refugee situations' as well as the EU 'reception crisis'. Both aspects have led to the rise and consolidation of refugee camps, creating a state of 'liminality' many refugees find themselves in.[15]

2.1.1 Contextualising and defining refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that ongoing conflict and major crises have contributed to massive forced displacement over the past decade.[16] UNHCR estimates that currently 82.4 million people worldwide are forcibly displaced, which includes 26.4 million refugees who left their country in fear of conflict, violence or persecution.[17] Ferris outlines that 'most fundamentally, people flee their communities and their countries because their human rights have been violated'.[18] According to the Refugee Convention, a refugee is defined as 'someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted

[15] Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (n 12); Turner, *The Ritual Process* (n 12); Turner, 'Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual' (n 12); Turner, 'Betwixt and Between' (n 12).

[16] UNHCR, 'Global Trends 2019: Forced Displacement in 2019' (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2020) <https://unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/> accessed 2 April 2021.

[17] UNHCR, 'Refugee Statistics' (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2021) <https://unhcr.org/refugee statistics/> accessed 2 April 2021.

[18] Elizabeth Ferris, 'Protracted Refugee Situations, Human Rights and Civil Society' in Gil Loescher and others, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications* (United Nations UP 2008) 78.

for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion'.[19] For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is important to look beyond the legal definitions, which are often narrow due to the political constraints of international law, in order to include the experiences and reality of all refugees. Here, anthropologist Kubo defines refugees in a broader perspective as:

> (1) those who are in an asylum status in a host country, and (2) those who are in an unstable, in-between condition, because of the lack of protection in their original country or the lack of asylum status in their host country, thus having the right to receive aid for survival, regardless of their statelessness.[20]

This definition accounts for the broader understanding that refugees are people who are forced to leave their country based on natural disaster, conflict, violence and/or other types of threats. By emphasising the state of **in-betweenness** that refugees often find themselves in, it acknowledges that being a refugee or not (and being labelled accordingly) is not necessarily clear or fixed, as one's status might change over the course of protracted exile. Here, it is also important to acknowledge the multi-layered situation of vulnerability that many refugees find themselves in.[21] Hence, in this thesis, I understand and refer to 'refugees' based on the following description provided by Harrel-Bond and Voutira:

> In anthropological terms, refugees are people who have undergone a violent 'rite' of separation and unless or until they are 'incorporated' as citizens into their host state (or returned to their state of origin) find themselves in 'transition', or in a state of 'liminality'.[22]

In addition, it is important to take into consideration the political semantics of the distinction between 'migrants' and 'refugees', two terms that are often used interchangeably. Whereas migrants are defined as

[19] Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 28 July 1951, entered into force 22 April 1954) 189 UNTS 137 (Refugee Convention).

[20] Tadayuki Kubo, 'Toward an Anthropological Study of Refugees: Anthropology at a Refugee Camps' (2010) 75 Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology 146, 159.

[21] Richard Black, 'Livelihoods under Stress: A Case Study of Refugee Vulnerability in Greece' (1994) 7 Journal of Refugee Studies 360; Fred Nyongesa Ikanda, 'Animating "Refugeeness" through Vulnerabilities: Worthiness of Long Term Exile in Resettlement Claims among Somali Refugees in Kenya' (2018) 88 Africa 579; Edward Newman and Joanne van Selm, *Refugees and Forced Displacement: International Security, Human Vulnerability, and the State* (United Nations UP 2003).

[22] Barbara E Harrell Bond and Eftihia Voutira, 'Anthropology and the Study of Refugees' (1992) 8(4) Anthropology Today 6, 7.

people staying outside of their country of origin, usually 'in order to find work or better living conditions',[23] refugees meet the criteria of having a 'well-founded fear of being persecuted'.[24] Nevertheless, migrants may also flee because their livelihoods are threatened, whether due to poverty, violence and conflict, climate change, or other circumstances. These push factors, depending on their gravity and intensity, can easily transform and generate conditions that cause a 'well-founded fear of persecution', but heavily depend on 'bureaucratic labelling'.[25] Hence, the distinction between 'migrant' and 'refugee' is often ambiguous in reality, as a grey zone of similar push and pull factors operate behind both types of cross-border movements. Accordingly, it is important to highlight that in 2015 and 2016 'mixed migration flows' arrived in Greece, with both migrants and refugees.

Kandylis outlines that there is also an ambiguous distinction between the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker'.[26] Although they are officially distinguished by, respectively, having been granted refugee status or still awaiting this decision, in practise the term 'refugee' is used for both. Moreover, he points out that 'asylum seeker' is 'a limited category, as many displaced people are excluded from even the right to apply for asylum or have various reasons to be unwilling to apply'.[27] Accordingly, he explains that UNCHR started using the broad term 'people of concern' which indicates their attempt 'to avoid several legal and political intricacies'. Similarly, this thesis refers to 'residents' of the refugee camp, regardless of their ambiguous legal status as migrant, refugee or asylum seeker.

2.1.2 Protracted refugee situations and refugee camps

Scholars highlight that many refugees are displaced for long periods of time. By the end of 2018, about 11.9 million refugees have been in exile for more than five years, resulting in a growing number

[23] Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 'Migration' (*Oxford Learner's Dictionary*) <https://oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/migration> accessed 7 July 2021.

[24] Refugee Convention (n 19).

[25] Roger Zetter, 'Labelling Refugees: Forming and Transforming a Bureaucratic Identity' (1991) 4 Journal of Refugee Studies 39.

[26] George Kandylis, 'Accommodation as Displacement: Notes from Refugee Camps in Greece in 2016' (2018) 32(Special Issue 1) Journal of Refugee Studies i12, i12.

[27] ibid i13.

of protracted refugees.[28] UNHCR explains that 'a protracted refugee situation is one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo'.[29] Loescher and others find that 'both the number of protracted refugee situations and their duration continue to increase'.[30] In response to this trend, scholars underline that protracted refugee situations seriously compromise the human rights and security of refugees, with few prospects of improvement.[31] As many refugees stay in Greece for a longer period of time, these findings are important in contextualising the research.

Some scholars underline the systematic deficiencies in both recognising and dealing with protracted refugee situations. Loescher and others show that whereas the international community's response to refugees tends to focus on ad hoc solutions to crises, most refugees (about 70%) do not find themselves in emergencies but rather stuck in protracted refugee situations.[32] This is an important point, especially for the understanding of the case study of this research, as scholars identify a strong link between protracted refugee situations and the rise of refugee camps. Loescher and others find that 'millions of refugees struggle to survive in camps (…) and the vast majority of these refugees have been in exile for many years'.[33] Based on this, they call for a more systematic, predictable response to refugees and urge policymakers to create more sustainable, long-term approaches to overcome protracted refugee situations.

[28] Xavier Devictor, '2019 Update: How Long Do Refugees Stay in Exile?' (*Development for Peace*, 9 December 2019) <https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/2019 update how long do refugees stay exile find out beware averages> accessed 7 April 2021.

[29] UNHCR, 'Protracted Refugee Situations' (10 June 2004) EC/54/SC/CRP.14 <https://unhcr.org/excom/standcom/40c982172/protracted_refugee_situations.html> accessed 9 July 2021.

[30] Gil Loescher and others, 'Protracted Refugee Situations and the Regional Dynamics of Peacebuilding: Opinion' (2007) 7 Conflict, security & development 491, 491.

[31] Jeff Crisp, 'Conference Papers: 4. The Nature and Consequences of Protracted Crises No Solutions in Sight: The Problem of Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa' (2003) 22 Refugee Survey Quarterly 114; Loescher and others, 'Protracted Refugee Situations and the Regional Dynamics of Peacebuilding: Opinion' ibid; Gil Loescher and others, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications* (n 18); Jennifer Hyndman, 'A Refugee Camp Conundrum: Geopolitics, Liberal Democracy, and Protracted Refugee Situations' (2011) 28(2) Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 7; James Milner, 'Protracted Refugee Situations' in Elena Fiddian Qasmiyeh and others, *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (OUP 2014); Jennifer Hyndman and Wenona Giles, *Refugees in Extended Exile: Living on the Edge* (Taylor & Francis 2016).

[32] Loescher and others, 'Protracted Refugee Situations and the Regional Dynamics of Peacebuilding: Opinion' (n 30) 491.

[33] Loescher and others, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications* (n 18) 3.

In this context, Hyndman argues that protracted refugee situations create a 'refugee camp conundrum' in which refugees are 'stuck in legal limbo without most of the basic human rights to mobility, work, and residence'.[34] She highlights that 'refugee camps are always only supposed to be "stopgap measures," but they have proven to be persistent', thereby turning into consolidated sites of displacement.[35] Based on a case study of a Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, she explains that humanitarian crises become a silent emergency as displacement is contained (and therefore hidden) in refugee camps. Hence, Hyndman poses that 'refugee camps are anything but neutral, purely humanitarian spaces' and therefore calls upon scholars to adopt more critical and political perspectives in their research.[36]

2.1.3 The European Union and its reception crisis

To contextualise the rise of refugee camps in Greece, it is important to understand the EU's political context during the arrival of migrants and refugees in 2015-2016. Here, a broad range of scholarly literature gives an insight into the EU's response to the increased migration flows into its territories.

Some scholars focus on the emerging discourse of a 'refugee crisis' and the subsequent securitisation practices initiated by the EU.[37] Pallister-Wilkins argues that the language of 'crisis' adopted by policymakers regarding the migration flows is in itself political.[38] Fundamentally, it portrays the 'refugee crisis' as an unforeseen event, rather than part of a larger migratory system that includes, amongst others, the lack of safe and legal routes, the rise of smuggler networks and increasingly tough European border enforcement. Moreover, Pallister-Wilkins argues that the term 'crisis' is understood as applying to the EU, whereas with an honest reflection on whose crisis this really is, 'the contingent suffering, variegated vulnerability and political subjectivity of people on the move

[34] Hyndman (n 31) 8.
[35] ibid 12.
[36] ibid 14.
[37] Jef Huysmans, 'The European Union and the Securitization of Migration' (2000) 38 Journal of Common Market Studies 751; Sarah Léonard, 'EU Border Security and Migration into the European Union: FRONTEX and Securitisation through Practices' (2010) 19 European Security 231; Polly Pallister Wilkins, 'Interrogating the Mediterranean "Migration Crisis"' (2016) 21 Mediterranean Politics 311.
[38] Pallister Wilkins (n 37).

takes centre-stage'.[39] Overall, she emphasises that discourses about the 'refugee crisis' are usually connotated with a sense of perceived threat, seen from a Eurocentric perspective.

Accordingly, Kandylis highlights that 'the crisis discourse was not triggered by numbers'.[40] In demographic terms, it was not such an overwhelming arrival of migrants to the EU as presented in the refugee crisis discourse, but due to their arrival in concentrated areas (the so-called hotspots), the management and solidarity among EU member states were crucial. As there were shortcomings in this respect, scholars argue it is a crisis of politics rather than one of numbers.[41] This is not to say that the migrant flows and subsequent political hesitation did not generate a humanitarian crisis as a result, but it highlights a different source and understanding of 'crisis'.[42] Based on this, the term 'reception crisis' better reflects the political and societal realities of the increased mix-migration flows into the EU that occurred in the years 2015 and 2016.

Other scholars analysed how security concerns and securitisation practises have shaped public opinion as well as policy processes regarding the migration flows.[43] These mutual relationships are relevant, as the thesis surveys both the policy and perception side of refugee camps, which are usually associated with security concerns. According to Lutterbeck, the hegemonic discourse portrays irregular migration as 'a "threat" to the

[39] Pallister Wilkins (n 37) 314.

[40] Kandylis (n 26) 12.

[41] The hegemonic European discourse presents the arrival of migrants and refugees as a 'flood', creating an imaginary in which the other is entering EU territories en masse (Georgios Karyotis, 'Securitization of Migration in Greece: Process, Motives, and Implications' (2012) 6 International Political Sociology 390). Statistically, more than a million refugees and migrants reached Europe in 2015, while 4.000 drowned (UNHCR, 'Over One Million Sea Arrivals Reach Europe in 2015' (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 30 December 2015) <https://unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/12/5683d0b56/million sea arrivals reach europe 2015.html> accessed 18 June 2021). Nevertheless, by the end of 2019, the share of refugees in the EU is only 0.6% compared to its total population (European Commission, 'Statistics on Migration to Europe' (*European Commission*, 2021) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities 2019 2024/promoting our european way life/statistics migration europe_en> accessed 18 June 2021).

[42] Nina Perkowski, 'Deaths, Interventions, Humanitarianism and Human Rights in the Mediterranean "Migration Crisis"' (2016) 21 Mediterranean Politics 331.

[43] Huysmans (n 37); Derek Lutterbeck, 'Policing Migration in the Mediterranean' (2006) 11 Mediterranean Politics 59; Léonard (n 37); Nora Ratzmann, 'Securitizing or Developing the European Neighbourhood? Migration Management in Moldova' (2012) 12 Southeast European and Black Sea Studies 261; Karyotis (n 41); Andreja Vezovnik, 'Securitizing Migration in Slovenia: A Discourse Analysis of the Slovenian Refugee Situation' (2018) 16 Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies 39.

stability and the welfare of European states and societies'.[44] Focussing on the political implications this may have, scholars have analysed how ideas of securitisation and humanitarianism played a role in the justification and legitimation of policy decisions.[45]

Based on this, some scholars argue that the EU's response to the arrival of migrants and refugees has challenged its normative self-representations.[46] Here, Niemann and Zaun outline that the EU's measures to curb the migration flows, resulting in deaths at its external borders, have raised serious questions about the EU as a self-proclaimed promoter of human rights worldwide.[47] They observe that the EU's response to the increased migration flows were intolerant and inhumane, which tested its ability to uphold its human rights values as a humanitarian disaster 'unravels at the EU's doorsteps'.[48]

Scholars see the lack of solidarity among the EU member states as an important limitation in times of crisis.[49] The lack of EU solidarity is often presented as an argument in public debates about how hotspot countries such as Greece are handling the reception crisis, including its management of refugee camps. In short, the increased influx of migrants and refugees into the EU has generated a discourse of 'crisis' and fear, resulting in securitisation practices rather than normative policies based on human rights and solidarity.

[44] Lutterbeck (n 43) 64.

[45] Rita Floyd, 'Can Securitization Theory Be Used in Normative Analysis? Towards a Just Securitization Theory' (2011) 42 Security Dialogue 427; Polly Pallister Wilkins, 'The Humanitarian Politics of European Border Policing: Frontex and Border Police in Evros' (2015) 9 International Political Sociology 53; Violeta Moreno-Lax, 'The EU Humanitarian Border and the Securitization of Human Rights: The "Rescue Through Interdiction/Rescue Without Protection" Paradigm' (2018) 56 Journal of Common Market Studies 119.

[46] Sibylle Scheipers and Daniela Sicurelli, 'Normative Power Europe: A Credible Utopia?*' (2007) 45 Journal of Common Market Studies 435; Amelia Hadfield and Andrej Zwitter, 'Analyzing the EU Refugee Crisis: Humanity, Heritage and Responsibility to Protect' (2015) 3(2) Politics and Governance 129; Roxana Barbulescu, 'Still a Beacon of Human Rights? Considerations on the EU Response to the Refugee Crisis in the Mediterranean' (2017) 22 Mediterranean Politics 301; Sandra Lavenex, '"Failing Forward" Towards Which Europe? Organized Hypocrisy in the Common European Asylum System' (2018) 56 Journal of Common Market Studies 1195; Stefania Panebianco and Iole Fontana, 'When Responsibility to Protect "Hits Home": The Refugee Crisis and the EU Response' (2018) 39 Third World Quarterly 1.

[47] Arne Niemann and Natascha Zaun, 'EU Refugee Policies and Politics in Times of Crisis: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives' (2018) 56 Journal of Common Market Studies 3.

[48] Panebianco and Fontana (n 46) 1.

[49] Liz Fekete, 'Migrants, Borders and the Criminalisation of Solidarity in the EU' (2018) 59(4) Race & Class 65; Luisa Marin, Simone Penasa and Graziella Romeo, 'Migration Crises and the Principle of Solidarity in Times of Sovereignism: Challenges for EU Law and Polity' (2020) 22 European Journal of Migration and Law 1.

Overall, scholars describe the EU and its external border regime as 'Fortress Europe'.[50] In turn, these exclusionary policies are an important factor in the continued creation and prolongation of protracted refugee situations around the world.

2.1.4 Limbo and liminality

The combination of protracted refugee situations worldwide and the EU's fortification of its external borders have left many migrants and refugees stuck in a state of limbo. Here, limbo is defined as 'an uncertain period of awaiting a decision or resolution; an intermediate state or condition' and 'a state of neglect or oblivion'.[51] Several scholars have analysed how the notion of limbo as a physical space, legal irreconcilability or metaphysical state of mind affects the lives of refugees.[52] To theorise the meaning of limbo from an anthropological perspective, this thesis introduces and explains the concept of liminality, a term coined by van Gennep.[53]

In his book *The Rites of Passage,* van Gennep describes the cultural phenomena of change where people are transitioning from one destination to the next.[54] Based on such transitions, he identifies four types of rites that take place across different cultures and societies: a passage in status (eg changing from being an outsider to an insider), a passage in place (eg physically moving from one place to the next), a passage of situations (eg starting a new job) and a passage of time (eg birthday celebrations).[55] Van Gennep outlines that a rite of passage

[50] Christof Roos, *The EU and Immigration Policies: Cracks in the Walls of Fortress Europe?* (Palgrave MacMillan 2013); Sabine Lehner and Markus Rheindorf, '"Fortress Europe": Representation and Argumentation in Austrian Media and EU Press Releases on Border Policies' in Giovanna Dell'Orto and Irmgard Wetzstein, *Refugee News, Refugee Politics* (Routledge 2018); Jiska Engelbert, Isabel Awad and Jacco van Sterkenburg, 'Everyday Practices and the (Un)Making of "Fortress Europe": Introduction to the Special Issue' (2019) 22 European Journal of Cultural Studies 133; John Reynolds, 'Fortress Europe, Global Migration & the Global Pandemic' (2020) 114 AJIL unbound 342.

[51] Lexico, 'Limbo' (*Lexico Dictionaries*) <https://lexico.com/definition/limbo> accessed 17 June 2021.

[52] Michael Leach and Fethi Mansouri, *Lives in Limbo: Voices of Refugees under Temporary Protection* (University of New South Wales Press 2004); Awa M Abdi, 'In Limbo: Dependency, Insecurity, and Identity amongst Somali Refugees in Dadaab Camps' (2005) 22(2) Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 6; Ben Hightower, 'Refugees, Limbo and the Australian Media' (2015) 28 International Journal for the Semiotics of Law 335.

[53] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1965).

[54] ibid.

[55] Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts, 'Liminality' in James D Wright (ed), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd edn, Elsevier 2015) 132.

has three consecutive stages, with corresponding ceremonial rules of conduct.[56] The first stage is the separation from one's initial status, where one becomes detached from their previous identity and community. Second, there is an ambiguous, liminal stage that is characterised by transition, in-betweenness and the suspension of identity and social rules. The third and final stage welcomes and reintegrates the individual into its new identity, status and social position.

Focussing on the in-between stage, Turner further developed the concept of liminality.[57] Turner explains that 'liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, conversation and ceremonial'.[58] In other words, liminal personae are in a stage of ambiguity of 'no longer' but also 'not yet' belonging.[59] Hence, Turner characterises the subject in the liminal phase with a 'structural invisibility' where the 'liminal personas have nothing' and the condition of liminality offers 'no status, property, rank, or position in a kinship system – their condition is poverty'.[60] Nevertheless, he considers liminality as a very creative stage, because individuals who find themselves there are able to escape the norms from the stages both before and after. The question is, however, whether it remains positive and productive when liminality is no longer a stage or an exception, but becomes the new normality, as is the case for refugees who have no sight on moving back to previous or ahead to next phases of belonging; they are stuck in their rites of passage.

Based on this, a number of scholars have taken up the concept of liminality to describe the physical, material, cultural and symbolic position of migrants and refugees in Europe.[61] They consider liminality

[56] van Gennep (n 53).

[57] Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (n 12); Turner, *The Ritual Process* (n 12); Turner, 'Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual' (n 12); Turner, 'Betwixt and Between' (n 12).

[58] Turner, *The Ritual Process* (n 12) 95.

[59] Harry Wels and others, 'Victor Turner and Liminality: An Introduction' (2011) 34 Anthropology Southern Africa 1, 1.

[60] Turner, 'Betwixt and Between' (n 12) 9.

[61] Sarah Nimführ, 'Living in Liminality. Ethnological Insights into the Life Situation of Non Deportable Refugees in Malta' (2016) 70 Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde 245; Ioanna Tsoni, '"They Won't Let Us Come, They Won't Let Us Stay, They Won't Let Us Leave". Liminality in the Aegean Borderscape: The Case of Irregular Migrants, Volunteers and Locals on Lesvos' (2016) 9(2) Human Geography 35; Zoë O'Reilly, '"Living Liminality": Everyday Experiences of Asylum Seekers in the "Direct Provision" System in Ireland' (2018) 25 Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography 821; Halleh Ghorashi, Marije De Boer and Floor Ten Holder, 'Unexpected Agency on the Threshold: Asylum Seekers Narrating from an Asylum Seeker Centre' (2018) 66 Current Sociology 373; Marina Gold, 'Liminality and the Asylum Process in Switzerland' (2019) 35(3) Anthropology Today 16.

as a useful lens to explain the ambiguous, uncertain socio-spatial and temporal experiences of marginality and exclusion which refugees face. Whereas Turner's conceptualisation of the rites of passage assumes a necessary transition into the next consecutive phase, refugees often find themselves trapped in this in-between condition without the social, spatial, and/or legal possibility to move on. Here, Tsoni explains that the protracted refugee situations lead to the 'gradual socio-spatial and temporal "stretching" of liminality from a transitional phase towards a condition of permanent and portable liminality'.[62] Similarly, Gold explains that 'this process of "in-betweenness" is increasingly long, and at times indefinite'.[63]

Hence, scholars have used the concept of liminality to analyse asylum seeker centres in the Netherlands, asylum processes in Switzerland and Ireland, and the situation of non-deportable refugees in Malta.[64] Not just the refugees but also the refugee system and sites are characterised by liminality, as 'liminal legality' prevents refugees from resocialisation into a new status.[65] Moreover, O'Reilly introduces the term 'ontological liminality' to describe the 'chronic sense of fear, insecurity, invisibility and a highly controlled existence [that] are lived and internalized' by refugees, which defines their experience and identity during the protracted liminal phase.[66] In the context of Greece, the scholarly literature that analysed refugees' experiences of liminality is still limited. It includes studies of the refugee camp dynamics on the Greek islands Lesvos and Chios, an immigrant day-care centre in Athens and the creation of liminal EU territory in Greece through the hotspot approach of the European Commission.[67] These scholars emphasise that refugees experience a 'condition of permanent and portable liminality' both on an individual and collective level.[68]

[62] Tsoni (n 61) 35.
[63] Gold (n 61) 16.
[64] Nimführ (n 61); O'Reilly (n 61); Ghorashi, De Boer and Ten Holder (n 61); Gold (n 61).
[65] Cecilia Menjívar, 'Liminal Legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan Immigrants' Lives in the United States' (2006) 111 American Journal of Sociology 999.
[66] O'Reilly (n 61) 821.
[67] Anna Papoutsi and others, 'The EC Hotspot Approach in Greece: Creating Liminal EU Territory' (2019) 45 Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 2200; Atalandi Apergi, 'Working with Liminality: A Dramatherapeutic Intervention with Immigrants in a Day Care Centre in Greece' (2014) 36 Dramatherapy 121; Tsoni (n 61); Muzaffer Sevda Tunaboylu and Ilse van Liempt, 'A Lack of Legal Protection and Limited Ways Out: How Asylum Seekers Cope with Liminality on Greek Islands: Lesbos and Chios' (2020) 34 Journal of Refugee Studies 1560.
[68] Tsoni (n 61) 35.

Other scholars instead analyse the situation of migrants and refugees in Greece in terms of 'temporality'.[69] For example, Kandylis emphasises that the resort to refugee camps as the 'temporary' accommodation for refugees in Greece actually 'prolong and expand displacement'.[70] In this context, the distance and isolation that prolonged displacement in refugee camps creates make human suffering 'look like a normal condition'.[71] Focussing on temporary migrants and refugees in Greece, Tsitselikis and Agelopoulos explain that 'temporariness is transformed through rigid legal threshold of acceptance' which is used as a tool to categorise people into the binary opposition of inclusion (ie acceptance) and exclusion (ie rejection).[72] They highlight that the prospects of refugees, for whom Greece is usually a transit country on the route towards Western Europe and thus aim to stay only temporarily, 'are not clear, foreseeable or certain'.[73] Overall, it is the prolonged temporality that defines the state of liminality many refugees in Greece find themselves in while living in refugee camps.

[69] Kandylis (n 26); Konstantinos Tsitselikis and Georgios Agelopoulos, 'Temporary Migrants and Refugees in Greece: Transformative Challenges' in Pirkko Pitkänen and others (eds), *Temporary Migration, Transformation and Development* (Routledge 2019).
[70] Kandylis (n 26) i12.
[71] ibid i19.
[72] Tsitselikis and Agelopoulos (n 69) 126.
[73] ibid 138.

2.2 Conceptualisations of the refugee camp

Scholarly literature highlights that refugee camps function as spatial mechanisms of dealing with **the other**, which is strongly tied to practises of 'biopolitics'[74] and the humanitarian governance of 'care and control'.[75] This could make the refugee camp resemble and 'occupied enclave'[76] and ultimately as a 'space of exception'.[77]

2.2.1 Fences and walls: Dealing with the other

An inherent feature of the refugee camp is its gated structure; camps are confined spaces with different mechanisms in place that control the entry and exit of such enclaves.[78] To achieve a functioning gated structure, these mechanisms are usually a combination of physical separation (through walls, fences and gates) and bureaucratic control (through checkpoints, documentation and supervision). Typically, such gated enclaves are designed to define and control a one-way movement and, accordingly, control social geographies. Either they are meant to keep people in, with a freedom to enter; or they are intended to keep (certain) people out, with a freedom to leave. These opposite phenomena share the common presumption that there are different groups of people, of whom some belong and some do not, and who can be subjected to spatial inclusion and exclusion.[79] Such mechanisms are at the core of this research, as they outline some of the fundamental functions of refugee camps and their underlying motives.

Anthropologist Low introduced the term 'gated communities' to describe the form of residential segregation in the United States where the wealthy opt to 'retreat to secured enclaves with walls, gates, and guards'.[80] Driven by a discourse of fear of violence and crime, such gated

[74] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (n 13); Foucault, *Religion and Culture* (n 13); Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (n 13).

[75] Liisa H Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (University of Chicago Press 2012) 231.

[76] Hanno Brankamp, '"Occupied Enclave": Policing and the Underbelly of Humanitarian Governance in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya' (2019) 71 Political Geography 67, 73.

[77] Agamben (n 14).

[78] Brankamp (n 76).

[79] Stanley D Brunn, 'Gated Minds and Gated Lives as Worlds of Exclusion and Fear' (2006) 66(1/2) GeoJournal 5.

[80] Setha M Low, 'The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear' (2001) 103 American Anthropologist 45, 45.

communities are designed to benefit the privileged in their search for safety and security. Building on Low's analysis, scholars have researched gated communities all around the world.[81] What these communities have in common is a discourse of widespread fear of crime and **the other**, where subsequent spatial barriers have been set up in an effort to keep it out. Pow highlights that this results in social-spatial polarisation and 'moral geographies of exclusion'.[82] Overall, the discourse of fear is utilised as the justification and necessity for spatial segregation and separation to exclude the other.

Scholars have linked this sense of fear to the creation of refugee camps. Similar to the rise of gated communities, Diken explains that:

> The refugee invokes this fear and the related feeling of uncertainty, and the refugee camps are perfect materializations of a 'far of touching' made obvious by their very architectural design, their anti-urban ideal and their idealization of the sterile as an image of order.[83]

In this context, Appadurai outlines that 'global migrations across and within national boundaries constantly unsettle the glue that attaches persons to ideologies of soil and territory'.[84] He suggests that 'minorities in a globalizing world are a constant reminder of the incompleteness of national purity'.[85] Hence, Jones argues that in response, fences, walls and borders have become increasingly violent and are 'emblematic of a broader system that seeks to preserve privilege and opportunity for some by restricting access to resources and movement for others'.[86] For example, Brown explores what function walls perform symbolically, materially, physically and psychologically.[87] She argues that walls fortify

[81] Georjeanna Wilson Doenges, 'An Exploration of Sense of Community and Fear of Crime in Gated Communities' (2000) 32 Environment and Behavior 597; Karina Landman and Martin Schönteich, 'Urban Fortresses: Gated Communities as a Reaction to Crime' (2002) 11(4) African Security Review 71; Choon Piew Pow, 'Securing the "Civilised" Enclaves: Gated Communities and the Moral Geographies of Exclusion in (Post) Socialist Shanghai' (2007) 44 Urban Studies 1539; Zaire Zenit Dinzey Flores, *Locked In, Locked Out: Gated Communities in a Puerto Rican City* (1st edn, University of Pennsylvania Press 2013).

[82] Pow (n 81) 1539.

[83] Bülent Diken, 'From Refugee Camps to Gated Communities: Biopolitics and the End of the City' (2004) 8 Citizenship Studies 83, 91 92.

[84] Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Duke UP 2006) 83.

[85] ibid 84.

[86] Reece Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* (Verso 2016) 16.

[87] Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (Zone Books 2010).

national imaginaries by producing 'an imago of sovereign state power in the face of its undoing'.[88] Linking this to migration flows and the experience of asylum seekers, O'Reilly describes the 'architectures of exclusion created by states to contain or exclude "the other"'.[89] Nevertheless, in the modern globalised world, migration is something that cannot be fully avoided, as people, ideas, goods and services are becoming increasingly interconnected, beyond the control of border management.[90] Hence, where the rejection or expulsion of the other fails, the receiving state often deals with their presence in a contained, regulated manner in gated enclaves that symbolises capturing, controlling and neutralising the outside while being inside.[91] This function is performed by the refugee camp.

2.2.2 Biopolitics and humanitarian governance

Historically camps have been used to selectively contain or host populations within a designated space. The 20th century is considered the era of camps, with the proliferation of summer camps, sports camps and holiday camps; and a simultaneous rise of 'correction camps, military camps, refugee camps'.[92] Although very different in nature, what they have in common is their managed structure of 'large scale, detailed planning and control, self-sufficient communities with clear boundaries'.[93] Lofgren conceptualises the camp as 'part of a set of broader political technologies, aimed at controlling mobility and "governing life" through coercion and direct or indirect violent means'.[94] This function is best captured by the concepts 'biopolitics' and 'biopower' as developed by Foucault, which relevance was prompted by the fieldwork and conversations with residents of the Diavata camp.[95]

[88] Brown (n 87) 25.
[89] O'Reilly (n 61) 821.
[90] Mathias Czaika and Hein de Haas, 'The Globalization of Migration: Has the World Become More Migratory?' (2014) 48 International Migration Review 283.
[91] Agamben (n 14).
[92] Löfgren (2003), as cited in Claudio Minca, 'Geographies of the Camp' (2015) 49 Political Geography 74, 75.
[93] ibid.
[94] ibid 76.
[95] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (n 13); Foucault, *Religion and Culture* (n 13); Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (n 13).

In his book *The Will to Knowledge,* Foucault explains that 'power gave itself the function of administering life' and, accordingly, he links politics to the control of human biology.[96] He explains that the era of 'biopower' is introduced and characterised by 'an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations'.[97] In turn, he defines 'biopolitics' as the type of government that adopts biopower at the core of its practise and rationale; and thereby aims 'to ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order'.[98] In other words, 'biopolitics' is the style of governance that applies 'biopower' to its subjects in society and thereby controls all aspects of human life. However, Agamben argues that 'today it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West'.[99] More specifically, Peters argues that it is the **refugee camp** that has widely proliferated and takes centre stage in western practices of biopolitics.[100]

In this context, many scholars have adopted the terms 'biopolitics' and 'biopower' to describe the dynamics between the authorities and the subjects living in refugee camps.[101] Here, Kubo describes refugee camps as 'top-down, bureaucratically-managed social spaces, where refugees are visualized through enclosed geographical spaces and a standardized framework for aid'.[102] This shows a link between the 'control' of the daily functioning of the refugee camp and the 'care' that is provided by the humanitarian governance that often prevails there. As Malkki has put it, refugee camps are ambiguous, enclaved spaces of 'care and control'.[103] Similarly, based on Foucault, Brankamp argues that in the refugee camp it is 'the biopolitical control of humanitarian agencies and NGOs that register, sustain, and manage refugee lives in exile'.[104]

[96] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (n 13) 138.
[97] ibid 140.
[98] ibid 138.
[99] Agamben (n 14) 181.
[100] Michael A Peters, 'The Refugee Camp as the Biopolitical Paradigm of the West' (2018) 50 Educational Philosophy and Theory 1165.
[101] Diken (n 83); Lucas Oesch, 'The Refugee Camp as a Space of Multiple Ambiguities and Subjectivities' (2017) 60 Political Geography 110; Adam Ramadan, 'Spatialising the Refugee Camp' (2013) 38 Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 65; Olga Zeveleva, 'Biopolitics, Borders, and Refugee Camps: Exercising Sovereign Power over Nonmembers of the State' (2017) 45 Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity 41; Brankamp (n 76).
[102] Kubo (n 20) 159.
[103] Malkki (n 75) 231.
[104] Brankamp (n 76) 67.

Building upon Foucault's concept of biopolitics, Mbembe developed the notion of 'necropolitics' to explain how governance based on biopower is translated into contexts of violence, domination and colonisation.[105] Necropolitics describes 'the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die'.[106] He argues that 'biopower is insufficient to account for contemporary forms of the subjugation of life to the power of death'.[107] Several scholars have applied the notion of necropolitics to migration politics and policy, for example regarding asylum seeker welfare in the UK and the experience of refugees in Europe.[108] Overall, it is important to highlight the political meaning and implications of 'biopolitics' and 'necropolitics' as it sheds light on the potential destructive power of encampment on the exclusion, alienation and ultimately eradication of groups that are ought not to belong. This became a central theme in the research, as it reflected the experiences of the residents living in the Diavata camp.

Focussing on the refugee camp as a site of biopolitical and necropolitical control, several scholars have looked at refugee camps in terms of occupation.[109] They argue that both the internal dynamics of the camp, as well as its internal-external bordering and controlling can be best understood as an area under occupation, which is inherently linked with force, with military or police as its executive enforcers. For example, Brankamp explains that the 'humanitarian need for unobstructed management of aid operations' have led to a securitisation of refugee camps that justify and 'produce violent spatial effects of immobility, exclusion, and exception'.[110] Here, state authorities consider forms of 'occupation' in the camp necessary to achieve a greater good of 'care and control' under the banner of humanitarian aid. As several NGOs are present in the Diavata camp and play an important role in its residents' lives, it is important to examine the aspect of humanitarian presence.

[105] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Steven Corcoran tr, Duke UP 2019).
[106] Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze, *Biopolitics: A Reader* (Duke UP 2013) 161.
[107] Mbembe (n 105) 92.
[108] Thom Davies, Arshad Isakjee and Surindar Dhesi, 'Violent Inaction: The Necropolitical Experience of Refugees in Europe' (2017) 49 Antipode 1263; Lucy Mayblin, Mustafa Wake and Mohsen Kazemi, 'Necropolitics and the Slow Violence of the Everyday: Asylum Seeker Welfare in the Postcolonial Present' (2020) 54 Sociology 107.
[109] Nina Gren, *Occupied Lives: Maintaining Integrity in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in the West Bank* (OUP 2015); Brankamp (n 76).
[110] Brankamp (n 76) 67.

2.2.3 State of exception and the refugee

As previously discussed, one way to deal with the (inevitable) advent of the other in a states' territory is to create sites in which issues of sovereign identity can be temporarily paused. Accordingly, the refugee camp can function as an enclave for the other, where he/she practically resides inside the nation-state, but at the same time is literally and symbolically kept away from it. This is further explored through the 'state of exception' presented by Agamben.[111]

In the book *State of Exception,* Agamben introduces the term 'exception' as the 'juridical production of "bare life" by the sovereign'.[112] Here, the 'bare life' refers to the condition in which the merely biological dimension of life *(zoê)* is prioritised over the way in which life is lived *(bios)*, where the state neglects the possibilities and potentialities of the lives it rules. He discusses the increasing power of governments during supposed times of crisis and argues that such 'states of exception' justify the diminishment of rights. Linking this to the camp, Agamben explains that 'the essence of the camp consists in the materialization of the state of exception and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction'.[113] This means that the 'state of exception' has consolidated into a 'zone of indistinction between inside and outside' the judicial order.[114] Based on this, many scholars have used Agamben's state of exception to analyse the situation of refugees.[115] However, other scholars are critical of the application of the state of exception to the situation of refugees.[116] For example, Oesch argues that the 'complex spatial dynamics of exclusion and inclusion' depending on the refugee-citizen status make the refugee camp 'a space of multiple ambiguities' and therefore is not a clear-cut 'zone of indistinction'.[117]

Diken analyses the situation of refugees in terms of exception and *homo sacer*.[118] First, he conceptualises the refugee as an exception.

[111] Agamben (n 14).
[112] Oesch (n 101) 110.
[113] Agamben (n 14) 175.
[114] Jenny Edkins, 'Sovereign Power, Zones of Indistinction, and the Camp' (2000) 25 Alternatives: global, local, political 3, 6.
[115] Brankamp (n 76); Diken (n 83); Edkins ibid; Minca (n 92).
[116] Oesch (n 101); Ramadan (n 101).
[117] Oesch (n 101) 110.
[118] Diken (n 83).

Building upon Foucault, he explains that 'the foundation of sovereignty is normalizing or capturing the outside'.[119] Accordingly, the sovereign state needs to internalise and neutralise all under its reign. Refugees are 'the nomadic excess that the State seeks to capture and normalize through panoptic confinement, for example, in refugee camps'.[120] Here, Agamben's concept of exception is inherently present in all aspects of refugee life. Second, Diken understands the refugee as 'the *"homo sacer"*, the ultimate biopolitical subject whose life is stripped of cultural and political forms' and who has been removed from its former identities.[121] This figure or social 'zombie' is banned and excluded from society, but such a ban 'does not exist outside society but is radically internal to it'.[122] As Arendt describes it, those who 'left their homeland' have become 'the scum of the earth'.[123]

Based on these characteristics of the refugee, Diken conceptualises the refugee camp as a 'non-place'.[124] Non-places are sites where the exception has become the rule. This is defined by 'extreme isolation; not only physically but also socioeconomically and culturally'. He explains that refugees are isolated from public life and remain in protracted immobility, thereby 'keeping them in a limbo in sites of confinement'.[125] Augé, who coined the term non-place, outlines that is 'where the planet's refugees are parked'.[126] Linking this to protracted refugee situations and liminality, Diken outlines that whereas 'the camp is officially a transitory, so to say, an "exceptional" space' but in reality 'the refugee camp has today become a "permanent" location'.[127] Similarly, Abdi outlines that 'once camps are created, however, the initially hoped temporality often turns out to have been wishful thinking, as demonstrated by the many cases of protracted refugee situations in the last two decades'.[128] This shows that the refugee camp is a 'non-place' that exists for prolonged periods of time, thereby reinforcing that the exception has become the rule.

[119] Diken (n 83) 85.
[120] ibid.
[121] ibid 83.
[122] ibid 88.
[123] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (2nd edn, The World Publishing Company 1961) 267.
[124] Diken (n 83).
[125] ibid 92.
[126] Marc Augé, *Non Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (John Howe tr, Verso 1995) 34.
[127] Diken (n 83) 93.
[128] Abdi (n 52) 7.

In conclusion, there is a diverse range of scholarly literature that deals with different conceptualisations of the refugee camp. This thesis aims to contribute to this body of scholarly literature by focussing on an interpretive approach to the experiences of the residents living in a refugee camp in mainland Greece. The case of the Diavata camp is examined in the context of existing scholarly research about protracted refugee situations and the EU reception crisis.

3.

METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter discusses the methodological considerations and decisions made during the research process. Accordingly, it justifies the interdisciplinary focus of sociocultural anthropology and political science, introduces the case study of the Diavata camp and discusses the qualitative research methods used. As the thesis focuses on a vulnerable social group amid the Covid-19 pandemic, this chapter also elaborates on the ethical considerations and limitations of the research. Finally, it discusses the grounded theory approach utilised for the analysis and argumentation.

3.1 Disciplines: Sociocultural Anthropology and Political Science

This research takes an interdisciplinary approach with the aim to do justice to the complex nature of refugee experiences and human rights. It draws on the fields of sociocultural anthropology and political science, thereby focussing on the refugee camp as a social phenomenon, cultural context, and political site. Firstly, as Harrell-Bond and Voutira explain, the anthropological approach adds value in the study of refugees, since '[m]ost refugee predicaments involve cultures in violent collision. To survive, refugees must adapt to radically new social and material conditions. Documenting and interpreting the variety and diversity of human cultural phenomena is the work of anthropology'.[129] Accordingly, sociocultural anthropology offers a lens to understand the social meanings, cultural practises, (power) dynamics, systems

[129] Barbara E Harrell Bond and Eftihia Voutira, 'Anthropology and the Study of Refugees' (1992) 8(4) Anthropology Today 6, 7.

of behaviour, common beliefs (eg ideas and ideologies) and social arrangements that characterise life in a refugee camp. Secondly, the added value of political sciences is its ability to explain the political causes and effects of migrant flows both on a national and international scale. More specifically, it allows me to focus on the set of political ideas, policies and processes that govern the lives of refugees, who are by definition at the mercy of foreign governments and laws.

By relying on both disciplines, the thesis is able to combine life experiences of the refugee camp residents, while linking it to the realm of nation-state and EU politics and policy that largely defines and designs those spaces. This allows me to connect the 'structural' with the 'actual', which gives important insights into how this dynamic shapes the field of refugee studies and human rights, focusing specifically on the experiences of those living in refugee camps. As the former Greek state Policy Officer Connolly-Rangos pointed out in our discussion: 'Camps are a modality. They are very different to what people have seen. It is the part of migration that you can see, touch, feel. But the realities of the camp are in politics and policy'. This makes the 'refugee camp' a suitable context to combine the interdisciplinary focus between the fields of sociocultural anthropology and political science. Altogether, the relevance this gives to the thesis, from a human rights perspective, is the documentation and creation of a counter-narrative to both the hegemonic societal discourse and policy practice of exclusion.

3.2 Case study: The Diavata refugee camp

The thesis focusses on a single case study (rather than taking a more general approach) to gain more in-depth insights into one specific refugee camp in mainland Greece. This decision is based on the recognition that the refugee camp is an inherently complex space, especially for an outsider, given the diversity of peoples, cultures, stories and traumas that have assembled in an arbitrarily assigned but highly political space. Limiting the research to one case study allows me to spend more time at the research site and genuinely get to know the camp residents, which is needed to get a comprehensive understanding of the refugee camp dynamics and context. I do not claim that the Diavata camp is a representative case study. As it happens in all qualitative methodology, the purpose is to provide interpretation and understanding, not explanations and causality. Within the realm

of possibility, I have aimed for meaningful, 'thick description' in the analysis and writing of the thesis.[130]

The case study selection took place after considering different options and took into account both methodological and pragmatic aspects. For practical purposes, the refugee camp had to be within the region Central Macedonia, in the proximity of Thessaloniki, as the Covid-19 restrictions issued by the Greek government allowed only very limited movement. This leaves the possibility of focussing on the refugee camps in Alexandreia, Diavata, Lagkadikia, Nea Kavala, Serres and Veria.[131] Given the rapid closure of camps on the mainland, many were not suitable for research over a longer period of time.[132] The refugee camp near the village Diavata, on the other hand, would remain open.

This is the second camp established on the mainland, with its opening on 24 February 2016. The refugee camp was built at the site of the former Anagnostopoulous military camp, which was out of use and abandoned.[133] The camp is located on the industrial outskirts of the village Diavata, which is 7.5km from the city centre of Thessaloniki and belongs to the municipality of Delta in the region Central Macedonia in northern Greece. Although the public transport connection makes it a long ride to commute, the camp is relatively well-connected to its neighbouring village Diavata and the city of Thessaloniki compared to other refugee camps in mainland Greece. Throughout the years, NGOs have repeatedly reported that living conditions (including access to housing, sanitation and medical aid) are insufficient and human rights are compromised in the Diavata camp.[134] These concerns partly refer to

[130] Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture' (1973) HarperCollins Publishers 310.

[131] UNHCR, 'Reporting Greece' (*Global Focus: UNHCR Operations Worldwide*, May 2021) <https://reporting.unhcr.org/greece> accessed 29 May 2021.

[132] Greek Council for Refugees, 'Conditions in Reception Facilities' (*Asylum in Europe: Country Report Greece*, 10 June 2021) <http://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception conditions/housing/conditions reception facilities/> accessed 12 June 2021.10 June 2021

[133] RSA and Pro Asyl, 'Reception Crisis in Northern Greece: Three Years of Emergency Solutions' (RSA and Pro Asyl 2019) 11 <https://rsaegean.org/wp content/uploads/2019/05/Reception crisis in Northern Greece Three years of emergency solutions201905 final.pdf> accessed 12 March 2021.

[134] ARSIS, 'Improving the Greek Reception System through Site Management Support and Targeted Interventions in Long Term Accommodation Sites' (*ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth*, 2 May 2019) <http://arsis.gr/en/improving the greek reception system through site management support and targeted interventions in long term accommodation sites/> accessed 12 March 2021; ibid.

other refugee camps in mainland Greece, although they vary greatly in size, location and NGO presence. The Diavata camp was reported to be 'one of the most overcrowded camps in mainland Greece',[135] hosting an estimated number of 816 residents according to the latest reported figures.[136]

The Reception and Identification Service (RIS) representatives are Greek state authorities responsible for the Diavata camp, while the site management support is executed by the German NGO Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) and food is distributed by the Greek military.[137] The NGOs present in the camp include the Association for the Social Support of Youth (ARSIS) and Refugee Support Aegean (RSA), while Quick Response Team (QRT) operates mainly in the 'Casa Base' safe space for women and girls located next to the Diavata camp.

3.3 Methodology: Fieldwork, interviews and reports

The thesis draws on qualitative research methods. The methodology is threefold and consists of fieldwork (ie participant observation and informal interviews) in the Diavata camp area, in-depth interviews with informants and analysis of reports.

Firstly, field methods included informal, open-ended interviews with residents as well as participant observation. The fieldwork took place over the course of two months, in which I visited the Diavata camp area on different days of the week and times of the day in order to gain different experiences and to meet a variety of residents, therefore getting a more diverse picture of the camp.[138] To gain a holistic understanding, the variety of visits was also important because the weather of that day impacted the dynamics in the camp. On cold or cloudy days in April, not many residents were to be seen, leaving a desolate impression of the

[135] RSA and Pro Asyl (n 133) 11.

[136] UNHCR, 'Protection Monitoring Tool: Open Reception Facilities (Sites) in the Mainland' (UNHCR September 2018) 8 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67420> accessed 4 May 2021. The NGO Quick Response Team (QRT) works with the Diavata camp residents on a daily basis and they estimate the current number of residents to be 1216, as of April 2021. The presence of informal residents in the Diavata camp could account for the difference in the official and actual number of residents.

[137] UNHCR, 'Protection Monitoring Tool: Open Reception Facilities (Sites) in the Mainland' (n 136).

[138] The first site visit was on Sunday 18 April 2021 and the last was on Thursday 10 June 2021.

camp. During hot and sunny days in June, many residents were spending their time outside, as the heat that accumulates in their containers and tents becomes unbearable.

During the fieldwork, important challenges to overcome were the linguistic and cultural barriers. When visiting the Diavata camp area, I tied my hair and was wearing covering clothes that were as 'culturally neutral' as possible. As my language skills do not include the main languages spoken in the Diavata camp, I had to find translators who could join me during the site visits. Hence, I had a Greek or Arabic/Turkish/French translator with me (alternately male and female) to interpret during the informal interviews and conversations with residents of the Diavata camp. The ages of the translators ranged from 23 to 30 years old. One translator used to be a refugee from Syria and she ended up being a valuable research assistant. Although she never lived in a refugee camp herself, the camp residents truly opened up as they shared the same language, experiences of war and displacement, and (for the Syrians) memories of their home country.

Overall, I was able to connect and talk to a variety of residents, originating mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. There were also a number of Kurds in the camp, who had fled Iran, Turkey or one of the aforementioned countries. I met many girls (aged 10-18) who were easily approachable due to their curious nature and ability to speak multiple languages, thereby also functioning as translators for their families. I also spoke with mothers, fathers, families and single men (see Appendix: Overview informants).[139] It should be noted that during these conversations, I decided not to use a voice recorder, to guarantee the privacy of the interviewees and to allow them to speak more freely without feeling restrained. Instead, I took notes either during or after the conversation, with the permission of the interviewee.

Secondly, besides the fieldwork, I conducted formal, in-depth interviews with key informants, such as NGO coordinators and former Greek state policy officers directly involved in the Diavata camp and the Greek reception crisis more generally. The interviews with former policy officers who were involved in the creation of refugee camps in northern Greece, including the Diavata camp, gave me access to the institutional

[139] As may be noticed, I did not get to speak to any boys. Analysing the reasons for this is beyond the scope of my research, but the Casa Base safe space certainly made it easier to get into contact with girls rather than boys.

memory at the time. I also spoke with the Greek Ombudsperson for Children's Rights. Whereas some interviews took place in person, taking into account the Covid-19 precaution measures, others took place virtually through the platform Skype. While some informants agreed to be public in both their name and function, others were willing to speak freely and answer questions, but only under the condition of anonymity. As the information shared is still valuable, I decided to include it in the research, although the sources remain known only to me.

Third and finally, reports about the Diavata camp issued by NGOs, international organisations and the Greek government helped to complement the information gathered in the field. This was useful to gain insight into the long-term development of and changes within the Diavata camp, but it was also necessary given the limitations of my fieldwork, as outlined below. Furthermore, policy documents and reports from international organisations and the Greek government were relevant in understanding the camp conditions during the fieldwork, whenever the information from camp residents was absent, incomplete or contradictory. This was, for example, the case regarding the Covid-19 measures and construction of the three-metre high concrete wall.

3.4 Limitations and ethical considerations

The methodology is largely a result of the restrictions existing in the field. This includes the limited possibility to gain access to refugee camps in mainland Greece and the additional Covid-19 measures that were implemented by the Greek government throughout the conduct of this research. These conditions created difficulties, for example, in accessing the physical space of the Diavata camp area and in connecting with the residents. Despite close contact with NGOs and persistence in my attempts to receive official permission to visit the Diavata camp on a regular basis, the Covid-19 measures prevented this from happening. Therefore, the research had to be conducted on a step-by-step basis and with the flexibility to adjust its course based on changes in the Covid-19 measures. Throughout the research, I evaluated the possibilities of each situation with caution and care regarding the health and safety of everyone involved.

The restrictions in the field were challenging given the timing of my research, but they also created an opportunity. The limitations in

movement as well as access to the refugee camp and its residents, further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighted the exclusion that became a central theme in my research. The fieldwork was conducted in two months of Covid-19 measures in which NGOs were officially not allowed to enter the camp and the residents were placed in lockdown. The fieldwork was thus conducted in a particularly exclusionary period, as the Covid-19 pandemic added another layer of social isolation. During these two months, I also witnessed the construction of a three-metre high concrete wall around the Diavata camp (to my surprise, as this had not been publicly announced in advance). In short, although the limited movement and access were difficult for the fieldwork, the timing was interesting and unique as it allowed me to research a distinctive time of exacerbated exclusion.

Spaces of exclusion bring forth an ethical dilemma of not being able or allowed to access them, while the very research aim is to make these hidden voices heard and put their experiences at the centre stage. Although I was aware that the camp authorities would not be happy with my presence in the area, the residents themselves were open to conversations and repeatedly invited me. As Müller-Funk explains, 'research with refugees poses particular ethical challenges because of unequal power relations, legal precariousness, poverty, violence, politicized research contexts and the policy relevance of the research in question'.[140] In acknowledgement of the responsibility that comes with this, I have taken into account several ethical considerations. Among others, this includes having residents approach me (instead of the other way around), consent during conversations, not voice recording any interviews and only using pseudonyms for residents throughout the thesis to protect their privacy and identity.

[140] Lea Müller Funk, 'Research with Refugees in Fragile Political Contexts: How Ethical Reflections Impact Methodological Choices' (2021) 34 Journal of Refugee Studies 2308.

3.5 Analysis: Grounded theory approach

For my analysis, I utilised a grounded theory approach.[141] During the research, I was able to collect plenty of data from a diverse range of sources, based on the fieldwork at the Diavata camp area, in-depth interviews with informants and available reports. After transcribing the interviews and field notes, I carefully analysed, labelled and organised the data. Based on this, I was able to identify common themes and topics of discussion. Accordingly, I deducted important issues, concepts and ideas that were presented in the information I gathered from residents, NGO coordinators, policy officers and reports. Hence, the data collection and analysis informed the analytical chapters of the thesis; it was at the core of the arguments I developed and academic concepts I capitalised (ie those presented by Turner, Foucault and Agamben). This approach enabled me to prioritise topics that were of importance to my informants and, consequently, construct a coherent narrative based on their experiences.

[141] Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, 'Grounded Theory Methodology: An Overview' in Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (SAGE 1994).

4.

THE DIAVATA REFUGEE CAMP AS A SITE OF EXCLUSION

ولاحدود لاوجود بين فهم سوء لامنفى

Exile is a misunderstanding between existence and borders

Based on conversations with both camp residents and the former policy officers responsible for the set-up of the camp, this chapter discusses the Diavata camp as a site of multi-layered exclusion. First, the chapter will show that the remote location of the Diavata camp contributes to the isolation, marginalisation and exclusion of refugees. Their remoteness separates refugees from being socially, culturally and economically engaged in their Greek surroundings, thereby making the refugee camp a site of temporal and spatial liminality. Second, the chapter shows that the metal wire fence and guarded gate of the Diavata camp, together with the symbolic presence of the watchtowers inside, represent biopolitical practices of 'care and control'.[142] Nevertheless, residents reappropriate and renegotiate their relationship with the fence around the Diavata camp by leaving and returning through informal exits. This shows that the fence is largely symbolic, performing its function as a 'panoptic confinement' and technology of exclusion.[143] Third, the chapter discusses the impact of the Covid-19 measures on the refugee camp, which dictate that residents are not allowed to leave and NGOs are not allowed to enter. The discriminatory Covid-19 restrictions imposed on refugee camps put in practice the 'material

[142] Liisa H Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (University of Chicago Press 2012) 231.

[143] Bülent Diken, 'From Refugee Camps to Gated Communities: Biopolitics and the End of the City' (2004) 8 Citizenship Studies 83, 85.

architecture of occupation' that was already in place and, accordingly, made the Diavata camp resemble an 'occupied enclave'.[144] Overall, this chapter contributes to the thesis by providing a deeper understanding of the residents' experience of the Diavata camp as a site of multi-layered exclusion. Hence, it is valuable for the analysis of 'exclusion' in itself and potentially gives an insight into other refugee camps in mainland Greece which share the same characteristics (i.e. the remote location, the guarded fence and the Covid-19 measures) that contribute to experiences of exclusion.

4.1 Location: Remoteness of the camp and life at the margins

The Diavata camp is located 7.5km from the city centre of Thessaloniki (Figure 1), on the industrial outskirts 2km away from the village Diavata (Figure 2).[145] The refugee camp is separated from the Diavata village by the *Egnatia Odos* highway (Figure 3) and is surrounded by industrial warehouses and farmland, either in use or abandoned (Figure 4). Whereas the Diavata village looks like a place of residence, with stores, houses, schools and playgrounds, the area around the refugee camp does not look like people could or would live there. There are no signs that give the impression that people are actually living in the area. In contrast to remote houses in the countryside which appeal to the quiet of the environment, it does not look attractive to live in an area where warehouses are surrounded by fences, (broken) cameras and litter, and where the farmland is largely dried out and polluted with trash. Hence, the location of the Diavata camp is one of relative isolation, which contributes to the exclusion of refugees and positions their lives at geographical and societal margins. This places both the refugee camp and its residents in a 'spatial liminality'.[146]

[144] Hanno Brankamp, '"Occupied Enclave": Policing and the Underbelly of Humanitarian Governance in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya' (2019) 71 Political Geography 67, 73.

[145] Former Policy Officer B explains that this is 'different to other sites that are in the middle of nowhere; imagine a site with 3.000 refugees, many kilometres away from a village of 400 people and two hours away from Thessaloniki'.

[146] Zoe O'Reilly, '"Living Liminality": Everyday Experiences of Asylum Seekers in the "Direct Provision" System in Ireland' (2018) 25 Gender, Place and Culture : A Journal of Feminist Geography 821, 827.

Figure 1: Location of the camp with respect to Thessaloniki (Google Maps 2021).

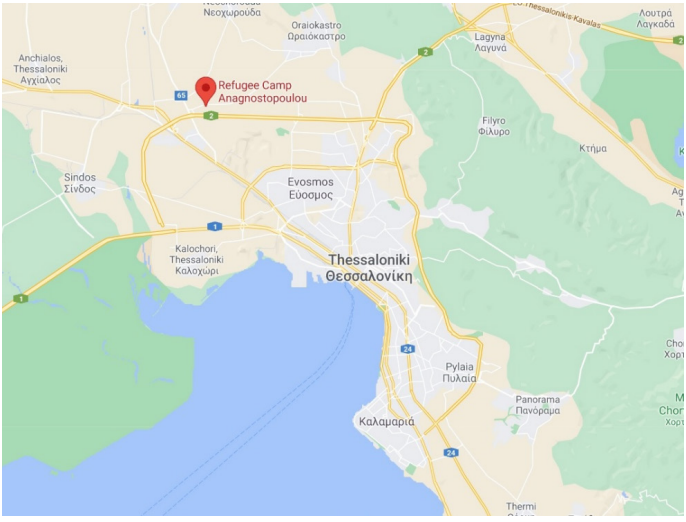


Figure 2: Location of the camp with respect to the village Diavata (Google Maps 2021).

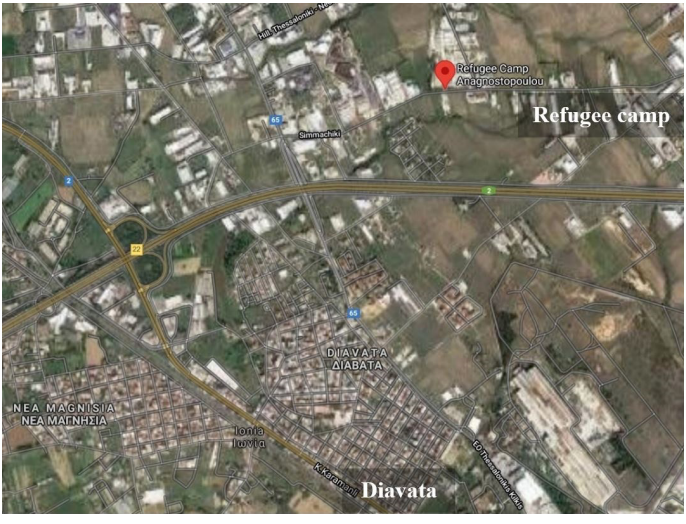


Figure 3: The highway separating the village and the camp (Google Maps 2021).

Figure 4: The empty fields around the Diavata camp.[147]

[147] All pictures are taken by the author.

4.1.1 The creation of refugee camps

Before discussing the rationale behind the location of the Diavata camp in more detail, it is important to contextualise the creation of refugee camps in Greece. When I ask former Greek state policy officers about the reasons refugee camps were created in Greece, they give me two main reasons. The first one was to decongest Idomeni, a small Greek village near the border with North Macedonia, where many refugees arrive. Former Policy Officer B recalls: 'At the time [2015-2016], we had thousands of new arrivals per day. I remember that we had 12,000 arrivals on Lesvos during a weekend. The newcomers all had the aim to reach Germany, and as a result, a bottleneck was created in Idomeni'. In the small Greek village Idomeni, an unofficial makeshift camp was created overnight, facilitating illegal border crossings. Former Policy Officer Connoly-Rangos explains that 'between 7.000 and 14.000 people bulked down and were trapped in Idomeni' near the border crossing point. With the Balkan route having closed down, he approximates that 40,000 people got stuck in Idomeni. Hence, according to Connoly-Rangos, the only possibility was to create refugee camps, which was 'the same solution proposed by UNHCR, IOM [the International Organization for Migration] and the EU'.

The second and related reason is to temporarily accommodate the newcomers. Former Policy Officer B explains that: 'We had thousands of people coming in and few going out. There was a decrease with [the number of] allowed crossings across the borders. There was nowhere to put them and there were issues everywhere; in the mainland, on the islands'. Hence, to decongest the makeshift camp in Idomeni and to temporarily accommodate newcomers, 30 refugee camps were hastily set up in mainland Greece.[148] The Diavata camp was the second camp established on the mainland, with its opening on 24 February 2016. Hence, former Policy Officer B shares: 'I think it is safe to say that the intentions were fulfilled'. Firstly, Idomeni was evacuated in May 2016, as people were asked to leave the area. They left peacefully and without any use of force, and were accommodated in newly set up refugee camps. Secondly, according to him, the creation of refugee camps in

[148] Anna Papoutsi and others, 'The EC Hotspot Approach in Greece: Creating Liminal EU Territory' (2019) 45 Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 2200.

the mainland solved the accommodation problem, preceding additional accommodation programmes that were later developed in cities.

4.1.2 The rationale of the Diavata camp location

The interviews with former policy officers involved in the creation of the refugee camps in northern Greece gave a better insight into the rationale behind the location of the Diavata camp. Connolly-Rangos explains that finding public land for refugee camps was a major challenge. The government had to look for a large area (ie many squared metres) for a reasonable price, which was preferably close to existing infrastructures such as electricity nets, public transport and local markets. For example, Connolly-Rangos outlines that the electricity supply needs were quite high as a refugee camp is 'basically a new small neighbourhood' so if the location is too remote, electricity would have to be installed all the way there and it would be too costly. He explains that the initial plan was to bring refugee children to local schools and another idea was that the refugee camp would be revenue for local markets, as a 'payback for local residents' that would create jobs and stimulate markets. According to Connolly-Rangos, the Diavata camp in many ways met these criteria, as it is not too far from the village.

Looking at the Greek economic context, Connolly-Rangos describes how the national government-debt crisis made it difficult to access and transform sites into refugee camps. Much of the public land that links to value (eg in cities and ports) was held as mortgage payments to the International Monetary Fund as part of the Troika measures.[149] Connolly-Rangos explains that, for example, old hospitals or orphanages in the city centre would be ideal to host women and children but were unavailable in reality as they were mortgaged until repayments were made. This means that potential locations within or nearby cities were impossible to use. In contrast, Connolly-Rangos outlines that 'army camps were numerous' and many were abandoned. Here, he explains that although 'army camps are by itself secluded and isolated, they were not selected for their seclusion, but for their availability'.

[149] ΤοΒΗΜΑ, 'Βάζουν την Ελλάδα... υποθήκη' (*Ειδήσεις νέα Το Βήμα Online*, 22 May 2011) <https://tovima.gr/2011/05/22/politics/bazoyn tin ellada ypothiki/> accessed 14 July 2021.

4.1.3 Residents' experiences of spatial liminality

In reality, the secluded and isolated location of the Diavata camp largely impacts the experience of the refugees' time in the camp. Based on the Greek refugee camps that were created in 2016, Kandylis paints the wider picture that state authorities and humanitarian actors provided refugees with accommodation in camps 'that produce spatially isolated and socially marginal living spaces'.[150] Hence, residents from the Diavata camp experience their distance from the city as a key problem, as it limits a wide range of opportunities. For example, in an interview with RSA and Pro Asyl about the location of the Diavata camp, Hassan (an Afghani man) explains that 'we cannot access the services there easily, we cannot attend lessons there; we cannot learn the Greek culture. If you do not speak Greek, there is no job'.[151] To situate these experiences in the academic debate, Abdi argues that 'camps often established in peripheral regions lead to segregation and marginalisation of refugees' which sets the preconditions for exclusion.[152] As Diken explains, their life 'is marked by an extreme isolation; not only physically but also socioeconomically and culturally'.[153] The process of being excluded comes with deep emotional and psychological impact. In an interview with Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI), the 19-year old Amin (an Irani man) explains that 'camps are in far places, far from any human being. They are not close to Greek civilisation. It's so painful'.[154] He elaborates:

> There is no building around us, it's just plain. It's nothing. It feels like we are in another planet, like we are not alive. Sometimes I feel very hopeless and disappointed because other people here are in a worse position than me. I miss the seaside. I want to see a sunset again. These are inexplainable things.

[150] George Kandylis, 'Accommodation as Displacement: Notes from Refugee Camps in Greece in 2016' (2018) 32(Special Issue 1) Journal of Refugee Studies i12, i12.

[151] RSA and Pro Asyl, 'Reception Crisis in Northern Greece: Three Years of Emergency Solutions' (RSA and Pro Asyl 2019) 21 <https://rsaegean.org/wp content/uploads/2019/05/Reception crisis in Northern Greece Three years of emergency solutions201905 final.pdf> accessed 12 March 2021.

[152] Awa M Abdi, 'In Limbo: Dependency, Insecurity, and Identity amongst Somali Refugees in Dadaab Camps' (2005) 22(2) Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 6, 7.

[153] Diken (n 143) 92.

[154] Refugee Trauma Initiative (RTI), 'The Impact of Covid-19 on Refugees in Greece' (RTI 2020) 2 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/577646af893fc0b5001fbf21/t/5ef0bb675598594c56fcad77/1592835023114/2020-06_RTI_COVID19_REFUGEESGR.pdf> accessed 4 May 2021.

This shows that feelings of remoteness and isolation are at the foreground of refugees' experiences of exclusion, to an extent that it is described as both a geographical existence ('we are in another planet') and an ontological existence ('we are not alive'). In this way, the refugee camp spatially embodies the liminality experienced by refugees. In other words, the remote and secluded location create the 'spatial liminality' of both the refugee camp and its residents.[155] This impacts not just daily life, but a deeper sense of exclusion that substantially defines refugees being stuck in the liminal phase of a 'passage in place', which they are not only in the refugee camp but also on national and international levels.[156] For example, many refugees living in hitherto 'transit-country' Greece are stuck between the departure from their home country and arrival in destination countries like Germany. In an interview with RSA and Pro Asyl, Suleiman (an Afghani man) explains that 'here we are far from integration. We are far from a future. We are also far from our families. My wife and my three children are in Kabul'.[157] The spatial liminality, therefore, stretches beyond the borders of not belonging to the refugee camp and the Greek society; it emphasises extended spatial liminality with ties to the home country and family members abroad.

4.1.4 The village Diavata: Hostility and solidarity

The nearest place to other communities and to Greek society is the village Diavata, located at a 2km distance from the refugee camp. According to the latest population census, the village Diavata had 9,890 inhabitants.[158] While the number of refugees in the Diavata camp fluctuates, it has between 816 and 1216 residents according to UNHCR and QRT (estimated during a conversation in April 2021) respectively.[159] This suggests a noticeable difference in population size in the area. However, given the relative isolation of the camp, it is

[155] O'Reilly (n 146) 827.

[156] Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts, 'Liminality' in James D Wright (ed), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd edn, Elsevier 2015) 132, 132.

[157] RSA and Pro Asyl (n 151) 22.

[158] Census, 'Απογραφή Πληθυσμού Κατοικιών 2011. ΜΟΝΙΜΟΣ Πληθυσμός' (2011) <http://statistics.gr/documents/20181/1210503/resident_population_census2011rev.xls> accessed 14 May 2021.

[159] UNHCR, 'Protection Monitoring Tool: Open Reception Facilities (Sites) in the Mainland' (UNHCR September 2018) 8 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67420> accessed 4 May 2021.

important to examine to what extent the Diavata village and the refugees actually interact, and what their relationship looks like. According to Agelopoulos, Kapetanaki and Kousaxidi, there are two dominant, very distinctive views on immigrants and refugees in Greek society: one is expressed in xenophobic reactions, whereas the other in 'a positive empathy for refugees'.[160] Hence, were the refugee camp and its residents met with hostility or solidarity?

According to Maurice (QRT coordinator at Casa Base), the people living in the village Diavata were against the creation of the refugee camp at first. Former Policy Officer B remembers that 'protests led to delays in the constructions, as they [protestors] had closed the roads' which meant the military could not pass to build the camp and the arrival of new materials was halted. He says that 'it was a xenophobic reaction' and many police officers were deployed to stop the protests. However, after the initial protest, there was no more backlash. In fact, former Policy Officer B explains that the Greek government made an active effort to involve the locals from the village Diavata. For example, he shares that 'on the second day of the refugee camp being in operation, we brought in a group of locals' and this way, they could see for themselves what the refugee camp looked like.

Maurice explains that the initial attitudes of hesitation, criticism or protest by the locals of the Diavata village changed over time: 'Now they [locals] see how much money the refugees are bringing in'. He outlines that 'these are people [living in the village] who were not making it to the end of the month, but now they are renting out apartments or receiving supermarket vouchers of 30 euros'. The reason for this is that the residents of the refugee camp who live in containers receive food vouchers which they spend in the Diavata village. Most residents explain they prefer to do their groceries in the Lidl, which is a low-priced supermarket located just outside of the Diavata village. Former Policy Officer B poses that: 'The refugees were going to the local market and, therefore, were very visible. Based on other reactions we had seen, we were expecting something worse. They [locals] were expecting to see is monsters and jihadists. But what they saw were families and children'.

[160] Georgios Agelopoulos, Elina Kapetanaki and Konstantinos Kousaxidis, 'Transit Migrants in a Country Undergoing Transition: The Case of Greece' in Pirkko Pitkänen and others (eds), *Characteristics of Temporary Migration in European Asian Transnational Social Spaces* (Springer International Publishing 2018) 124.

Nevertheless, Maurice explains that some locals would comment or complain, for example about the Muslim women from the refugee camp wearing the hijab. This seems to be rooted in conceptualisations of **the other**, as he outlines that 'we actually did the same; our grandmothers were wearing a veil, the only difference is that we call it a veil instead of a hijab'. The refugees usually take the bus to get to the Diavata village, or alternatively to the city centre of Thessaloniki.[161] Here, a report by Refugees in Towns indicates that residents of the Diavata camp 'encounter locals on the bus, which sometimes leads to tension or conflict. For example, some locals accuse refugees of talking loudly and leaving trash on the bus'.[162] Such instances of racism from the local Greek population signals a sense of not belonging and, thereby, contributes to existing feelings of exclusion. As Pow explains, citizens 'often draw upon moralizing discourses of exclusion/inclusion that shape and structure territoriality and social life'.[163]

However, besides the negative reactions, former Policy Officer B explains that 'the solidarity of the locals was impressive and overwhelming'. He remembers that especially at the beginning, many people from the Diavata village were eager to offer support. According to former Policy Officer B, this means that those who reacted negatively before, for example in the protests, were now 'overwhelmed by massive solidarity'. Here, Seyda (a Kurdish girl) tells me that 'sometimes there are people protesting outside of the camp, who make music and share flyers about human rights and refugee rights'. She told me that camp residents like this, as it shows that 'people know about us, and people care about us'. She explains that this is something to easily forget when you are not in regular contact with the society around you. Nevertheless, the social awareness and solidarity is restrained as the location and architecture of the Diavata camp create the preconditions for societal oblivion to the existence of both the refugee camp and its residents.

[161] There is a bus stop directly in front of the refugee camp. The proximity of a bus stop was not the case before, as several reports indicate that there was no public transport available near the camp. See RSA and Pro Asyl (n 151).

[162] Refugees in Towns (RIT), 'To Integrate or to Move On? A Case Study of Refugees in Towns, Thessaloniki, Greece' (*Refugees in Towns*, 2020) 17 <https://refugeesintowns.org/thessaloniki> accessed 12 March 2021.

[163] Choon Piew Pow, 'Securing the "Civilised" Enclaves: Gated Communities and the Moral Geographies of Exclusion in (Post)Socialist Shanghai' (2007) 44 Urban Studies 1539, 1544.

In conclusion, the remote location of the Diavata camp contributes to the exclusion of refugees and positions their lives at geographical and societal margins. This places both the refugee camp and its residents in spatial liminality from Greek society that defines their experiences of geographical and ontological existence. Reports indicate that 'some refugees decide living in a camp far from the city centre is not worth the loss of access to services and jobs and try to find housing in Thessaloniki'.[164] However, the cost of this is that they are 'more exposed to racism and discrimination outside the insular'.[165] This highlights a negotiation between geographical isolation and societal discrimination, which both feeds into a deeply rooted sense of exclusion.

4.2 The fence: Symbolic segregation and residents' reappropriation

In the outskirts of the village Diavata, the refugee camp is easily recognisable by the closed-off fenced space in the middle of the industrial area. Upon my first arrival at the Diavata camp, I could see containers and tents on the other side of the fence, depicting a grey dystopia as the rainy clouds doomed over the site. Along the parameters of the Diavata camp runs a fence (Figure 5 and Figure 6). Some parts are simply metal poles supporting a metal wire fence, other parts of the perimeter consist of cement walls with a steel grating fence on top of it. The latter type is covering the whole east side of the camp. The main gate (Figure 7) is centred in the middle of the fence that runs along the road to/from Diavata, where cars and trucks pass by at a dangerously high speed. The main gate has an iron lock and is guarded by security officers. The old watchtowers (Figure 8) within the parameters are remains from the times in which the site was used by the military, but together with the guarded fence, it gives a grim impression of being enclosed and, additionally, of being watched. Hence, the architecture of the camp contributes to the spatial liminality experienced by its residents, as it symbolises their everyday exclusion through a system of 'care and control'.

For a map of the Diavata camp, see Figure 11.

[164] RIT (n 162) 17.
[165] ibid.

Figure 5: The south side of the fence.

Figure 6: The west side of the fence.

4.2.1 The idea behind the fence: Care and control

The interviews with the former policy officers gave a better insight into the initial idea behind the fences enclosing the refugee camps in Diavata and elsewhere. Former Policy Officer B explains that 'every site had boundaries, and the only reason for a fence was to identify those boundaries'. The residents of the camp are 'free to come and go as they want' and, therefore, the fence is 'not a controlled structure'. Instead, he describes it more as the parameters of a camping area, 'which probably is actually more regulated than the camps'.[166] Former Policy Officer Connolly-Rangos agrees that 'the camps were created as open facility centres, in which the restraints of the fence are more for practical use than detention use'. The fence is thus presented as defining the designated areas of the camps. However, many scholars argue that 'clear boundaries'[167] and 'enclosed geographical spaces'[168] are the basic set-up for spatial biopolitical control. In other words, the existence of a fence enables the full control of the residents' lives in the refugee camp by the camp authorities.

In their explanation, the former policy officers do refer to a sense of 'care and control' regarding the refugees. Former Policy Officer B outlines that the fence contributes to the 'efforts to keep those who do not live there outside, for safety reasons of the beneficiaries'. Similarly, Connolly-Rangos explains that the fence was intended to keep people with no access outside. At the same time, the fence helped to keep residents in as well. He explains that many (usually up to 50%) residents of the Diavata camp are children and the fence keeping them inside helps to minimise the issue of car accidents that were happening around refugee camps in mainland Greece. Indeed, later during a site visit, I encounter a reproof from Maurice (Casa Base) towards some girls who had climbed over the fence earlier and now found themselves in front of the fence next to the main road (south). Maurice told them with a serious, displeased tone: 'Why are you here? You are not supposed to be outside [the fence] on this side, either go to *Kasabassa* [the safe space]

[166] The leisure camping and refugee camp comparison is similar to the analysis of the camp presented by Löfgren (2003), as cited in Minca, 'Geographies of the Camp' (2015) 49 Political Geography 74, 75.

[167] ibid.

[168] Tadayuki Kubo, 'Toward an Anthropological Study of Refugees: Anthropology at a Refugee Camps' (2010) 75 Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology 146, 159.

or go back inside'. This shows that the fence does indeed symbolise a sense of care, although the means through which this is executed is that of control.

In short, the former policy officers explain that the idea behind the fence was for it to identify the refugee camp area and to be a safety measure. This shows that the function of the fence enclosing the Diavata camp closely resembles the 'care and control' technologies that scholars highlight to describe the role of those in power (ie camp authorities or state officials) towards those subjected to it (ie the residents of the camp).[169] As Hyndman emphasises, 'refugee camps are anything but neutral, purely humanitarian spaces' and similarly, the fence enclosing the Diavata camp is not a neutral given.[170] Therefore, it is important to explore its practical and symbolical functions.

Figure 7: Guarded main gate; Gate A on the map.

[169] Kubo ibid; Malkki (n 142); Minca (n 166); Brankamp (n 144).
[170] Jennifer Hyndman, 'A Refugee Camp Conundrum: Geopolitics, Liberal Democracy, and Protracted Refugee Situations' (2011) 28(2) Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 7, 14.

Figure 8: The watchtower at the east side of the fence.

4.2.2 Experiences of the fence and the watchtowers

Many residents of the Diavata camp refer to the fence as a symbolic prison. The very idea of being enclosed through metal wire makes Darya (an Irani woman) feel like 'we are captured inside what is supposed to be our homes'. During our conversation, Yezda (a Kurdish woman) describes what it feels like to be surrounded by a fence that is enforced by the authorities, with only one official gate which is controlled by the same authorities. She explains that 'in the end, it shows that we are not in charge, but subject to the goodwill of those who hold the key'. Moreover, Mohammad (a Syrian man) points out that there is usually a stray dog in front of the main gate: 'He barks at everyone, he is not gentle at all and everyone is afraid of this dog'. Mohammad says that 'the dog has already bitten people, but they [the camp authorities] leave him there to threaten people going out'. Accordingly, he links the presence of the fence to the presence of other hostile threats that are facilitated (or at least approved) by the authorities of the refugee camp.

In addition to the metal wire fence and the guarded gate, the presence of watchtowers within the camp are of great symbolic importance (Figure 8). As residents already experience living in a cage, the idea of watchtowers subjects the residents to a permanent psychological gaze. Even though the watchtowers are not in use, their mere presence is enough to remind one of the rise of hostile 'correction camps, military

camps, refugee camps' worldwide.[171] In addition, the patrols and surveillance by the security add the practical execution of the ever-present feeling that the lives of the residents living in the refugee camp are being watched, registered and controlled.

In her research O'Reilly finds that 'feelings of being trapped or confined by the space and by the asylum system emerged often' where refugees 'expressed feeling trapped, controlled, imprisoned, "bound", caught in "a cage", in "a bottle", in an "open prison", governed by external forces'.[172] According to Diken 'the refugee represents the nomadic excess that the State seeks to capture and normalize through panoptic confinement, for example, in refugee camps'.[173] He argues that government authorities are 'keeping them in limbo in sites of confinement' until it is clear whether they will be sent home.[174] This shows that, until then, refugees are kept in a position of exclusion, symbolised by the fenced enclosure of the refugee camp they live in. Hence, the architecture of the Diavata camp (ie the fence, the guarded gate and the watchtowers) contributes to the spatial liminality that was already established by its remote location.

Figure 9: Informal exit A, with a missing part of the fence.

[171] Minca (n 166) 75.
[172] O'Reilly (n 146) 828.
[173] Diken (n 143) 85.
[174] ibid 92.

Figure 10: Informal exit B, next to the closed, second gate; Gate B on the map.

4.2.3 Residents reappropriating the fence

The east side of the camp has a missing part of the fence, which leaves a hole for easy informal entry and exit of the camp (Informal exit A), only requiring to climb over the wall with a height of approximately one metre (Figure 9). It leaves an unguarded impression. Further along the road on the east side of the camp is a second gate (Gate B), in addition to the main gate, which is also used as an informal point of entry and exit (Figure 10). When a Kurdish woman approached the fence to greet me and we exchanged a few words, limited by the lack of a common language, her children soon joined and started climbing over the fence (Informal exit B). The lower part of the wall functioned as an improvised step upon the fence, after which they smoothly jumped over. Clearly, from the looks of it, this is a regular activity and the parents are okay with it. Other children, too small to climb over, were putting their arms through the fence or tried to climb on top of the lower part. The children are officially not allowed to leave the camp without a guardian, but they usually just climb over the fence, following the example of the adults.

When I asked former Policy Officer Connolly-Rangos about fences around refugee camps, he explained: 'We have seen it doesn't work if

you built a fence where it doesn't facilitate the inhabitants. For example, if they need or want a shorter route, they will cut open the fence'. The outside area of the Diavata camp, its immediate surroundings, indeed seem to be in use as an extended space for the residents. When I meet the girls Jhara (Irani), Rozhin (Syrian), and Rewan (Syrian) for the first time, they climb over the fence and take me around the perimeters of the camp. One of their fathers and an elder sister follow us as we moved out of their sight for a while. Other camp residents, mainly adults, were also going for a walk around the fence, kindly greeting us as we crossed paths, using the informal exits rather than the main gate. Furthermore, the holes in the fence also create other possibilities. Fatima (a Syrian girl) tells me that 'there are vegetable sellers, who know where the holes in the fence are, and they would just sell their vegetables through there'.

The phenomenon of so many residents using the informal exits of the camp rather than the main gate shows that even if it is designed as an open facility centre, refugees hesitate to use the main gate. Residents tell me they prefer to use the holes in the fence as they are less monitored by the security. Nevertheless, the awareness of the security presence and the camp authorities remains in the foreground. On the first day I visited the refugee camp area, some girls (Jhara, Rozhin and Rewan) tell me excitedly: 'You can come in! The manager is not here today'. They are aware that I, as an outsider, am not supposed to be in the camp. They are also aware that the hole in the fence (Informal exit B) provides the opportunity to bend the rules of the camp, especially when the authorities are not present or not paying attention. When I tell them I cannot climb through the fence, Jahra (an Irani girl) starts begging me if 'please, **please** I can come in', as they want to show me their tents. She emphasises that it is really not a problem and 'you can really come in' as the manager is not present today. Rewan (a Syrian girl) tells me that sometimes the security would also allow them to invite people in, and 'if the police say no we go there collectively'.

It is important to point out that the informal exits are visible to an extent impossible not to be seen by the camp authorities. Therefore, it is clear that the camp authorities know about it and, in turn, silently accept the informal exits and their use. Potentially they are maintaining the informal passage as they do not want camp residents to turn against them. Or possibly they do not care about fixing it because superficially, from the front, it seems like everything is fully enclosed and 'protected' from **the other**. However, given its great symbolic meaning, it is more

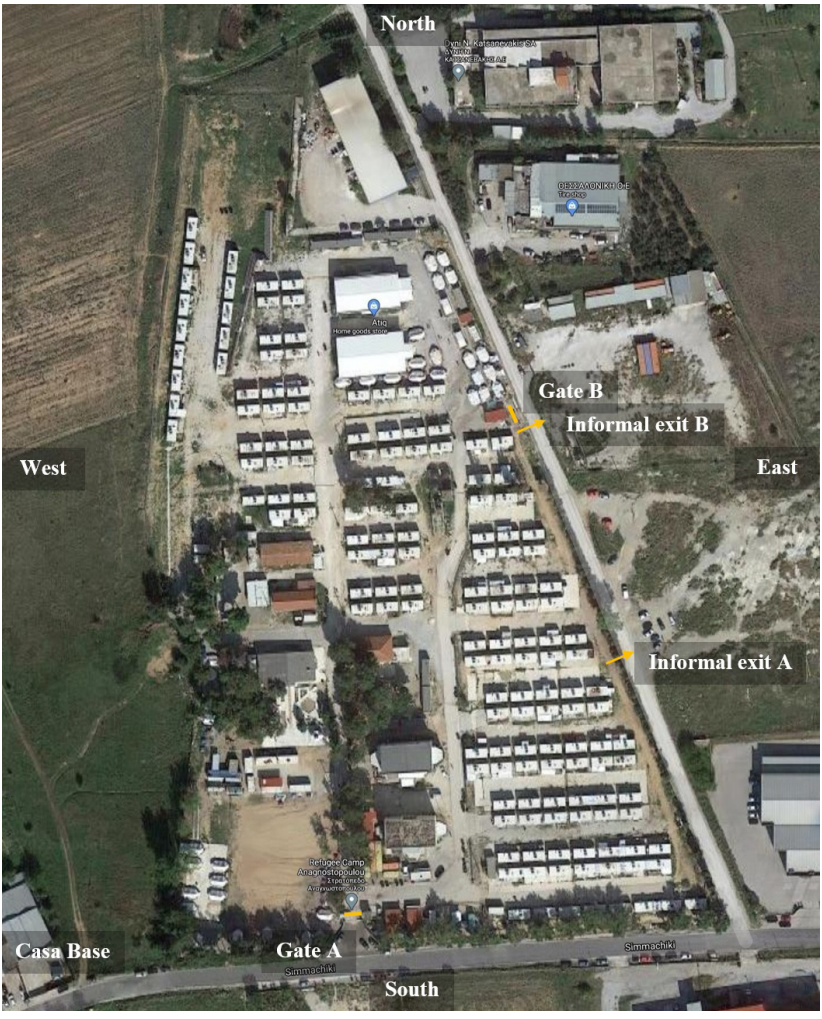
likely that sustaining the fence even solely symbolically is enough to perform its function as a 'panoptic confinement' and technology of exclusion.[175] In other words, the fence is mostly there for the appearance and sends a dual message: For the residents of the camp, it signals being enclosed and controlled; whereas for the citizens of the village Diavata and wider Greeks society, it shows that the refugees are 'put away'. Accordingly, the fence constructs an image of spatial order by representing a barrier of division between those who are part of society and those who are not.

Climbing over the fence through the informal exits is an act that directly engages with the norm which the fence upholds, namely that the refugees are in a space and position of exclusion. Even when climbing over the fence in itself trespasses this norm, it also reproduces it since the act of climbing over the fence is considered 'breaking the rules' and therefore the 'existence of the rules' is acknowledged. In other words, a violation of the norm does not mean that the norm does not exist, as the interaction with the norm is still there. Hence, for the Greek government, the feeling of having a fence could be enough to reassert authority and it, therefore, performs a strongly symbolic and performative function.

In conclusion, residents refer to the metal wire fence that encloses the Diavata camp as a symbolic prison. Based on the explanation given by former policy officers, the function of the fence is one of 'care and control'. In practise, the architecture of the camp (ie the fence, the guarded gate and the watchtowers) contributes to spatial liminality and symbolises the everyday exclusion of refugees, which exists even when the residents of the Diavata camp subvert it by climbing through the informal exits.

[175] Diken (n 143) 85.

Figure 11: Map of the Diavata camp (Google Maps 2021).



4.3 Covid-19 measures: The camp in lockdown

Scholars highlight that 'Greece has experienced a double challenge of being under austerity for the past decade and also facing an influx of refugees and migrants'.[176] However, during the time of this research, another crisis has emerged: The Covid-19 pandemic has changed lives around the world and thereby disproportionally affected vulnerable communities, including refugees.[177] As Mehdi (an Irani man) explains in an interview: 'Refugees suffer from poverty and hunger. Now they are facing another crisis in their lives, which is a crisis in [the] world'.[178] Accordingly, besides the remote location of the refugee camp and the guarded fence enclosing it, there is an important temporal aspect to take into account, namely the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the corresponding measures issued by the Greek government. For a period of two months, residents were not allowed to leave and NGOs were not allowed to enter,[179] which was regulated by biopolitical practices that made the Diavata camp resemble an 'occupied enclave'. In this context, the discriminatory Covid-19 measures imposed on refugee camps have further marginalised and excluded the residents of the Diavata camp.

4.3.1 Discriminatory restrictions for camps

Former Policy Officer Connolly-Rangos suggests that the initial rationale of having 'open camps' does not seem to be in place anymore, as 'camps now need to be secluded' according to the current Greek government. Since he was in office, the government has changed from the centre-left SYRIZA government to the liberal-conservative New Democracy government, the latter taking a harsher stance on migration issues.[180] Connolly-Rangos argues that 'the [current] government uses Covid-19 to limit refugees' movement', which illustrates that the

[176] Dimitrios Theofanidis and Antigoni Fountouki, 'Refugees and Migrants in Greece: An Ethnographic Reflective Case Study' (2019) 30 Journal of Transcultural Nursing 26.

[177] UNHCR, 'Refugees and the Impact of COVID 19' (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2020) <https://unhcr.org/events/campaigns/5fc1262e4/refugees and the impact of covid 19.html> accessed 21 June 2021.

[178] RTI (n 154) 3.

[179] Brankamp (n 144).

[180] From 21 September 2015 until 8 July 2019, the political party SYRIZA formed the Greek government, headed by Prime Minister Alexis Tripras. After this, from 8 July 2019, until today, the political party New Democracy forms the government, headed by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

pandemic is utilised as an excuse to further isolate refugees. At the same time, while Greek society, NGOs and international organisations are largely occupied with the impact of the pandemic, the government passed controversial measures which further threaten the human rights of refugees in Greece.[181] In other words, the Covid-19 pandemic is used as a pretext to implement politics that were already on the New Democracy government agenda.

Since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, Human Rights Watch reported that the Greek government implemented discriminatory restrictions in the refugee camps.[182] Similarly, the Greek Council for Refugees finds that refugees in 'mainland camps have continued to be subject to a further and disproportionate restriction of their movement, in the context of measures aimed at countering the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic'.[183] While Greece was lifting its restrictions and opening up again, the lockdown imposed on refugee camps was extended. Even when there were no cases recorded in the camps, the Greek authorities continued to uphold 'discriminatory and unjustified restrictions on migrants' freedom of movement'.[184] Even without these lockdown measures in place, their freedom of movement is restricted as a Joint Ministerial Decision dictates that 'exit from the facilities is only allowed between 7 am - 7 pm, only for one family member or representative of a group, and only in order "to meet essential needs"'.[185]

Moreover, the Greek Council for Refugees outlines that the regulations for Covid-19 outbreaks in refugee camps follow different, stricter protocols compared to other enclosed spaces, such as nursing homes.[186] To manage the outbreak in refugee camps, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum implemented the 'Agnodiki plan' which stipulates that the

[181] Amnesty International, 'Report Greece: Everything You Need to Know about Human Rights in Greece' (*Amnesty International*, 9 April 2021) <https://amnesty.org/en/countries/europe and central asia/greece/report greece/> accessed 21 June 2021.

[182] Eva Cossé, 'Greece Again Extends Covid 19 Lockdown at Refugee Camps' (*Human Rights Watch*, 12 June 2020) <https://hrw.org/news/2020/06/12/greece again extends covid 19 lockdown refugee camps> accessed 12 June 2021.

[183] Greek Council for Refugees, 'Conditions in Reception Facilities' (*Asylum in Europe: Country Report Greece*, 10 June 2021) <http://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception conditions/housing/conditions reception facilities/> accessed 12 June 2021.10 June 2021

[184] Cossé (n 182). Seyda (a Kurdish girl) tells me 'I have taken four or five PCR tests and I was always negative, but despite the negative results of me and my family and friends they told us to stay inside and locked everyone'. She says that others were testing negative too, and it was unclear why they had to stay inside if nobody was sick.

[185] Greek Council for Refugees (n 183).

[186] ibid.

whole refugee camp should be quarantined and 'all cases (confirmed and suspected) are isolated and treated in situ'.[187] In contrast, during outbreaks in other enclosed spaces the Covid-19 positive individual is taken to safe accommodation elsewhere, while all confirmed and suspected cases are isolated in a separate facility. Hence, these different regulations are not only discriminatory but also problematic given the poor conditions at the refugee camp. Human Rights Watch flags that the Greek government has 'done little to protect camp residents from Covid-19 or mitigate the risk of infection in the facilities' as there are still problems of overcrowding (which makes social distancing impossible) and insufficient access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene.[188]

4.3.2 Residents not being allowed to leave

During the 'lockdown' in the Diavata camp, residents were not allowed to leave the refugee camp and were told to stay inside their containers or tents as much as possible. Zahra (an Afghani woman) explains that 'as we were not allowed to leave our containers, we were not allowed to communicate with each other'. Hassan (a Syrian man) lives in the camp together with his wife and three children. He arrived in the refugee camp seven months ago, during the Covid-19 pandemic, and lives in an improvised tent that he built himself. He explains that 'for months, the camp was closed for everyone'. Residents tell me that for about two months they were not allowed to go out of the camp, and others were not allowed to come in. Hassan adds: 'At some point, my wife needed an ambulance, but it wasn't allowed to go in, and she wasn't allowed to go out. How can they refuse us [access to] medical care? One of my children is hurt in her eye since a bombardment in Syria. For me, I still have bullets in my body'. Denying access to healthcare is very problematic and can create life-threatening situations, especially given the complicated medical conditions that are associated with people who fled conflict, violence or human rights violations; and given the generally poor health of residents living in containers and tents.

[187] Greek Council for Refugees (n 183).

[188] Cossé (n 182). It is also worth noting that for half a year after the vaccination programmes in Greece were launched, refugees were still not able to register for a vaccine (Katy Fallon, 'Greece Rolls out "Long Awaited" Mass Vaccine Campaign to Refugees' (*Al Jazeera*, 3 June 2021) <https://aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/3/greece rolls out vaccination programme in refugee camps> accessed 21 June 2021).

Yezda (a Kurdish woman) explains that 'I wanted to buy vegetables for my family during Ramadan, but they wouldn't let me out and I didn't want to take the risk of being caught while climbing over the fence'. Nevertheless, many residents were still leaving the Diavata camp. Yezda adds that 'there were four police cars stationed around the camp; one in the front, one next to the bus station, and two behind the camp'. Other camp residents similarly describe how the police were checking people from their cars. NGOs confirmed 'a greater number of police around camps during lockdown measures, checking anyone entering or leaving'.[189] Ahmad (a Syrian man) tells me that 'the police would be whistling, yelling and shouting at people, and make them come over to the car'. Maurice (Casa Base) explained that the residents 'were asked to show their identification and were given warnings about not having sent a text' although only a few residents got fined.[190] In their report, RTI states that '[a] man in Diavata camp, wanted to go to the supermarket to buy a sim card so he could send the required text messages. Police fined him once on his way to the supermarket and once on the way back, despite his attempts to explain himself'.[191]

These practices closely resemble an 'occupied enclave' in which biopolitical technologies are 'aimed at controlling mobility and "governing life" through coercion and direct or indirect violent means'.[192] Here, Brankamp argues that 'although refugees try to resist and circumvent such regulations, permits and curfews are invasive bureaucratic technologies which regulate the cadences and spatio-temporalities of everyday life in the camp and are hence both disciplinary and biopolitical in their effects'.[193] Hence, the Covid-19 restrictions imposed on the residents put in practice the 'material architecture of occupation' that was already in place at the Diavata camp, since the fence, the main gate, the security and police patrols were existent structures of exclusion that now could be employed at an intensified manner.

[189] RTI (n 154) 8.
[190] As part of the Covid 19 lockdown in Greece, all individuals residing in Greece were required to send a text message indicating a number that corresponds with one of the six justified reasons to leave the house. The fine for not abiding by the Covid 19 regulations amounts to 300 euros. This is double the monthly cash assistance refugees receive.
[191] RTI (n 154) 9.
[192] Minca (n 166) 76.
[193] Brankamp (n 144) 73.

Moreover, the Covid-19 restrictions further exacerbated refugees' experiences of temporal and spatial liminality. When speaking about the period in which Covid-19 measures dictated their lives, residents such as Aisha (an Iraqi woman) say that they 'lost track of time'. The women and girls in the Diavata camp who form a photography club at the Casa Base safe space have taken some pictures to capture their experiences of living in the camp during the Covid-19 lockdown. One picture depicts a woman sitting in front of an informal, improvised tent. She holds a sign with the text 'Stay Home' which, they tell me, represents the message from the government and the restrictions imposed on the camp residents. Aisha (Iraqi woman) explains:

> To understand our situation during the pandemic, you have to understand what 'staying at home' means for us. These tents are not what you can call a home. If people in Thessaloniki are already suffering when they are not allowed to leave their apartments, just try to imagine not being allowed to leave these tents.

4.3.3 NGOs not being allowed to enter

Reports indicate that '[d]ue to government regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19, "non-essential" services and group activities provided by NGOs closed from early March. This included child-friendly and women-friendly spaces, and educational, psychosocial, vocational and youth projects'.[194] After receiving instructions from the camp authorities, NGOs working in the Diavata camp had to stop their activities as they were no longer allowed to enter. At this time, I had applied to be a volunteer at ARSIS, a Greek NGO focussing on the social support of youth. I would be an English teacher giving classes in the safe zones for unaccompanied minors within the Diavata refugee camp.[195] However, before the very first visit, the ARSIS coordinator shared that 'it is impossible to have access' to the Diavata camp due to

[194] RTI (n 154) 14.

[195] ARSIS, 'Support to vulnerable children in Nea Kavala and Diavata Camps and Thessaloniki Social Service's Centre' (*ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth*, 1 January 2017) <http://arsis.gr/support to vulnerable children in nea kavala and diavata camps and thessaloniki social services centre/> accessed 12 March 2021; ARSIS, 'Improving the Greek Reception System through Site Management Support and Targeted Interventions in Long Term Accommodation Sites' (*ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth*, 2 May 2019) <http://arsis.gr/en/improving the greek reception system through site management support and targeted interventions in long term accommodation sites/> accessed 12 March 2021.

the rising number of Covid-19 cases. I did not hear about the re-opening of the refugee camp for NGO activities until almost two months later. The residents of the refugee camp confirm that for two months, the NGOs had stopped coming to the camp.

The RTI report indicates that NGOs' activities being put on hold has impacted the wellbeing of the residents living in refugee camps, as NGOs could no longer offer them 'a sense of community, respite, and [the feeling that] his life was progressing'.[196] However, during conversations with residents, I learnt that the camp authorities are condoning QRT in the continuation of their support both inside the Diavata camp and at the Casa Base safe space. Maurice (Casa Base) explains that QRT provides important assistance to both the refugees and the administration of the Diavata camp. It was evident from the relaxed way in which Maurice moved inside the camp that his presence was fully accepted and normalised. He was always acting in compliance with the necessary formalities (ie permissions and authorisation) while entering the camp. At the same time, he seemed sure that his presence was regulated not only on the basis of formalities but also due to an unspoken structure of approval. Hence, similar to the holes in the fence, the Diavata camp presents a context where authorities are tolerating everyday practices that exist parallel to the 'grammar of formalities'.

4.3.4 Exclusion from education and recreation

Residents not being allowed to leave the camp and NGOs not being allowed to enter has disbarred refugees from participating in educational and recreational activities. After almost a year without classes, Maurice explains that 'the kids are supposed to go back to school next week, but nobody knows when or how it is supposed to go'. NGOs have raised concerns that existing problems of exclusion have been aggravated by the Covid-19 measures that were placed on the refugee camps. For example, the Greek Council for Refugees reports that:

> The disproportionate restrictions imposed on camps, in the context of measures aimed at limiting the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, further compounded the already limited access of the children living in mainland camps to education, during the periods when schools were open.[197]

[196] RTI (n 154) 14.
[197] Greek Council for Refugees (n 183).

Similarly, in an open letter to the relevant Greek and European authorities, advocacy groups flag the 'inconsistent interpretation of COVID-19 related movement restriction policies by the Greek authorities, which ends up discriminating against children who, as a result, are not being allowed to leave these camps'.[198] When I asked the Greek Deputy Ombudsperson for Children's Rights, Theoni Koufonikolakou, about the impact of Covid-19 on the children living in refugee camps, she underlines that they have been exceptionally isolated. She explains that 'children in camps were excluded from online education' while schools across the country moved their classes online. In an interview with RTI, the 20-year old Mehdi (an Irani man) explains that 'online workshops are dependent on connection and [the] data situation is impossible in Diavata camp'.[199] Koufonikolakou argues that even if the Greek Ombudsperson would be able to give them access to stable Wi-Fi and technological equipment, it is unsure whether online education in the camp is feasible in practise.

Based on the field visits she conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, Koufonikolakou concludes that 'children feel trapped there'. She explains that the exclusion of children living in refugee camps during the Covid-19 pandemic has many aspects which highlight the already existing difficulties in accessing, among others, educational and recreational activities. For example, the often remote location of refugee camps forces residents to take the bus, but the use of public transport was not allowed under the Covid-19 regulations. Similarly, this chapter has shown that the guarded fence around the Diavata camp, which is already in place to control movement, provides the authorities with the necessary tools to implement even stricter regulations on its residents during the Covid-19 pandemic. This illustrates that material architectures of occupation are utilised under the pretext of the Covid-19 pandemic, which most of all impact the children of the refugee camp.

In conclusion, the Covid-19 measures have exacerbated the social, spatial and temporal experiences of marginality and exclusion. The discriminatory restrictions imposed by the camp authorities (eg the residents not being allowed to leave and NGOs not being allowed to enter) made the refugee camp an 'occupied enclave' of biopolitical

[198] Caritas Hellas, 'Open Letter: "All Children Have the Right to Go to School. Do Not Take That Away from Them"' (*Caritas Hellas | Κάριτας Ελλάς*, 9 March 2021) <https://caritas.gr/en/advocacy en/open letter all children have the right to/> accessed 12 June 2021.

[199] RTI (n 154) 14.

control. Overall, this forms an additional layer of exclusion on top of the temporal and spatial liminality residents already experience due to the remote location and guarded fence of the Diavata camp.

5.

LIVING IN LIMINALITY: SPACES OF EXCEPTION VERSUS BELONGING

داریم تعلق بشریت به ما همه ، باشید داشته یاد به.

Remember, we all belong to the humankind

This chapter is dedicated to understanding the experience of living in liminality. First, it discusses life in the Diavata camp by sharing the observations and concerns of its residents. This includes refugees' experiences regarding the living conditions, the lack of intercultural communication, hostility from the camp manager and police, as well as the tensions with other residents. Here, the thesis argues that life in the camp is characterised by a sense of hopelessness and timelessness, forming a 'state of exception' and 'permanent liminality'. Second, the chapter turns to a different site, located directly next to the Diavata camp. The Casa Base safe space for women and girls (by residents and volunteers consistently referred to as *Kasabassa*) is an environment characterised by empowerment, positivity and belonging. Third, the chapter analyses the co-existence of these contradictory spaces. Here, it argues that the refugee camp symbolises and materialises a feeling of **exception**, whereas *Kasabassa* embodies a feeling of **belonging**. The spaces of 'exception' and 'belonging' existing next to each other gives the refugee women and girls the agency (a 'free pass') to navigate their position between the boredom and suffering in the refugee camp, and the imaginary, temporary breaks from liminality offered by *Kasabassa*. Overall, this chapter contributes to the thesis by providing a deeper understanding of what experiences of 'exception' versus 'belonging' mean in the context of the Diavata camp and *Kasabassa*. By conceptualising the distinct sites – operated by the camp authorities and an NGO – it scrutinises how the interplay between governmental and humanitarian actors influences refugees' negotiation of 'normality' within the realm of liminality.

5.1 Experiences in the refugee camp

During our conversations, refugees shared their experience of life in the Diavata camp. The residents explained that the living conditions in the camp and the impact of the weather makes daily life difficult. Moreover, the antagonistic attitude of the camp manager, the lack of intercultural communication, and the threats and hostility from authorities create a sense of uncertainty and fear. Based on this, life in the camp is characterised by a sense of hopelessness and timelessness, forming a 'state of exception' and 'permanent liminality'.

Figure 12: Containers, shared between two families.

Figure 13: Informal, improvised tents in the south-west corner.

5.1.1 Living conditions

When I first arrive at the Diavata camp area, I see container units and a bit higher up the hill (north) UNHCR tents, also known as prefabs. They are all placed in a structured way and numbered accordingly. Some residents of the refugee camp live in a container (Figure 12), which is shared between two families: 'Every prefab has two rooms, but only one air conditioner in the corridor and one bathroom'.[200] Others live in UNHCR tents and Jhara (an Irani girl) shows me hers; the tent is low and small for the two parents and three children who live in it. Moving from a tent to a container is considered an upgrade, although it is clearly a relative upgrade. Jhara tells me that her friend 'just got an upgrade from a tent to a container', but Maurice (Casa Base) explains that 'the containers are awful too'. The residents tell me that they struggle, whether they live in the containers or UNCHR tents. In an interview with RSA and Pro Asyl, Hassan (a Syrian man) reports that '[t]he main problem we face now is that the camp is overcrowded. Even inside the containers they place always two families. We were with another family until recently, but they left. [With] eight persons we shared two rooms, one bathroom and kitchen'.[201]

Besides these two types of official 'accommodation' in the refugee camp, there are informal, improvised tents which are meant for holiday camping trips, sometimes covered with UNHCR plastic sheets (Figure 13). These tents are mainly located on an empty field in the south-west corner of the camp or along the east side of the fence. Hassan (a Syrian man) built an improvised tent for himself, his wife and their three children, as they were not assigned a container nor a UNCHR tent. He explains how 'in the beginning, Maurice helped us built shelter, but with the snow the roof broke down and fell on my children. We had to build another one. Maurice gave us materials to build it and we also bought some at the village Diavata'.

News reports highlight that 'harsh winter conditions hit northern Greece a few days into the new year, bringing sub-zero temperatures,

[200] RSA and Pro Asyl, 'Reception Crisis in Northern Greece: Three Years of Emergency Solutions' (RSA and Pro Asyl 2019) 12 <https://rsaegean.org/wp content/uploads/2019/05/Reception crisis in Northern Greece Three years of emergency solutions201905 final.pdf> accessed 12 March 2021.

[201] ibid 21.

strong winds, snow and ice'.[202] It emphasises that 'freezing weather is exacerbating difficult conditions for migrants in overcrowded refugee camps'.[203] Darya (an Irani woman) mentions the snow that fell twice earlier this year. Rewan (a Syrian girl) tells me that her family has an extra heater for the cold days, which the manager does not know about. Although everyone in the camp is impacted, extreme weather conditions especially affect those living in the camping tents. In an interview with RSA and Pro Asyl, Hassan (an Afghani man) describes the three months in which he and his family stayed in the camp informally: 'We slept in a small tent during this first period. We stayed for one month unprotected from the strong rainfalls of that period, getting wet again and again (…) We suffered a lot because it was cold, humid and we slept on the floor. We felt very unsafe'.[204]

There are also single men sleeping outside, in the open air, in the refugee camp. They are hiding from the camp authorities as they are not officially registered. They sleep under or next to the containers in the shade. Maurice points out that 'it is easier to hide for single men' compared to families or single parents with children. What residents find most frustrating, is that one of the buildings in the camp is empty, but the camp authorities transformed it into a storage area. Nevertheless, they live in tents for long periods of time. Maurice explains that 'people here are living in UNHCR tents that are at least two years old, while they are supposed to be destroyed after seven months'. This makes the conditions of the 'accommodation' really bad. Habid (a Syrian man) tells me that housing in the camp equals living with 'mosquitos, rats and in the cold'. Mohammad (a Syrian man) shows me videos of insects crawling in his tent, which he filmed with his phone to record the bad conditions they are living in. He explains: 'I tried to show this to the manager, but he doesn't care at all. Maybe if one day I arrive in a country that respects basic human rights, I will show and tell them everything; then they can decide if it is okay to treat people like that or not'.

During a conversation about life in the Diavata camp, Aisha (Iraqi woman) states:

[202] Marion MacGregor, 'Winter Conditions Add to Migrant Hardship in Northern Greece' (*InfoMigrants*, 16 January 2019) <https://infomigrants.net/en/post/14401/winter_conditions add to migrant hardship in northern greece> accessed 17 June 2021.
[203] ibid.
[204] RSA and Pro Asyl (n 200) 21.

> It is unbelievable. Why would you leave us here in a shitty camp with tents like this if there is space? Why would you give us barely enough food to survive, if we know that there is more food in storage? This is the case with all aspects of life in the camp. I don't know their reasons.

The weather also impacts daily life in the refugee camp in a different way than direct experiences of warm or cold temperatures. As the paths are not paved and the ground solely consists of soil, sand and dust from the road enters the residents' homes. Maurice explains that many children in the camp have asthma or developed lung problems. When it starts to rain, the ground turns into mud and it is too dirty to leave the containers or tents. During one of my visits, the weather is very warm and by the end of the day I can feel my lungs from the dust I inhaled. During another visit it has been raining a lot, flooding the camp and transforming it into a mud puddle. This shows that residents are subjected to different hardships due to the weather conditions, which is another sign that the basic conditions and infrastructure of the camp are not in place.

Moreover, I observe that residents are expanding their living space, for example by building small gardens in front of their containers. Maurice explains that 'they are doing this not because it looks nice, but because it gets very hot inside'. However, he adds that 'expanding is not allowed by the camp manager; sometimes he would just tell people it has to be broken down and they would have to tear it apart'. Rewan (a Syrian girl) tells me that on a sunny day it can be 20 degrees outside, but at least 30 degrees inside the container.

5.1.2 Lack of intercultural communication

Residents living in containers have a shared kitchen with another family in which they can cook their own meals. They receive vouchers or so-called cash-assistance to do groceries in the village Diavata.[205] Maurice explains that with this money, they are supposed to buy everything, including food, medicine, clothes and diapers – 'but the money they receive is barely enough to make it to the end of the month and often people struggle for basic needs like food'. The residents living in the UNHCR tents receive food three times a day, which is distributed by the

[205] RSA and Pro Asyl (n 200) 21.

Greek army. Zahra (an Afghani woman) says that 'we don't like the food they give us. It's bad quality and as Muslims we don't eat everything. They don't even explain what there is in the food, so we decide what to eat and what not to eat'.

During Ramadan, the army did not adjust their schedule and kept on delivering the food at three fixed times a day. This means that the residents who are fasting would recook the meals they received during the day after sunset. Some residents tell me that they stopped participating in Ramadan. Habid (a Syrian man) explains: 'I don't do Ramadan anymore, it is unnecessary for me. I know what it is like to live without food'. Moreover, a Refugees in Towns report indicates that residents of the Diavata refugee camp experience 'discrimination and bias from interpreters with prejudice against their nationalities'.[206] Here, Abdi points out that 'the international humanitarian organizations administering these camps function under different norms of culture, languages, and politics than the refugees they aid'.[207] Overall, the lack of intercultural communication contributes feelings of insecurity experienced by the residents of the Diavata camp.

5.1.3 The camp manager, threats and hostility

During our conversations, it becomes clear that the residents experience an antagonistic attitude from the camp manager. I hear that although the previous camp managers were nice, the current camp manager (who started in June 2020) is 'harassing people and trying to make their lives miserable'. While the camp manager knows about the deficiencies in the provision of basic needs, 'he chooses not to know and not to care'. Hassan (a Syrian man) gets angry when we start talking about the camp manager: 'We don't need him to treat us as humans, we want him to treat us at least as equals to animals. If he would just accept the treatment that animals get, we would be okay. Because it is already better than what we are getting now'.

Rozhin (a Syrian girl) and Jhara (an Irani girl) tell me that there are about eight different security guards in the camp. When I ask them

[206] RIT, 'To Integrate or to Move On? A Case Study of Refugees in Towns, Thessaloniki, Greece' (*Refugees in Towns*, 2020) 11 <https://refugeesintowns.org/thessaloniki> accessed 12 March 2021.

[207] Awa M Abdi, 'In Limbo: Dependency, Insecurity, and Identity amongst Somali Refugees in Dadaab Camps' (2005) 22(2) Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 6, 7.

about their opinion, they say that 'some of them have a good heart'. Residents tell me that other armed authorities around the Diavata camp concern them more. Hassan (a Syrian man) explains that during the past weeks 'they bring police here in the camp every morning at 5am to scare people'. The police target the small, improvised tents next to the containers and UNHCR tents, as they are officially not allowed in the camp. Hassan points out that 'even in these bad circumstances, they don't allow us to stay here, and they threaten us every day'. One of the residents of the small tents is a 40-year-old Palestinian man with serious medical issues. Abdul (an Afghani man) also lives in an informal tent and shares that 'two days ago, they came and wanted to kick me out of my tent and destroy my tent, it is really threatening'. According to Brankamp, this is part of the 'routinised violence which police forces wage' that creates and sustains the refugee camp as an occupied enclave, creating governance structures based on violent biopolitical behaviour by the camp authorities.[208]

More generally, Zahra (an Afghani woman) explains that 'there is not a good relation between people'. When I asked if those who have kitchens would cook for other people, she said 'no, everyone is just minding their own business. If you see someone suffering in front of you, you just keep quiet and say nothing, because otherwise it will come on you, the problem, and then the camp manager will be mad at you and the other people involved'. This shows that the hostility of the camp manager towards the residents also translates into mutual tensions and strategic distance among the refugees. At same time, Habid (a Syrian man) explains that 'nationalities stick together'. NGOs report 'fights between Afghans, Yazidis, Arabs and Kurds' and explain that the authorities did not intervene.

> The small number of military personnel stationed inside Diavata departed at night and did little to quell conflicts. Police are only stationed at the gate and cannot interfere with affairs inside the camp without a formal complaint, which costs 100 euros. Even if they can afford the fee, those who complain are threatened by family members of the accused.[209]

In an interview with RSA and Pro Asyl, Hassan (an Afghani man) comments on the physical and psychological effects this has on him and

[208] Hanno Brankamp, '"Occupied Enclave": Policing and the Underbelly of Humanitarian Governance in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya' (2019) 71 Political Geography 67, 67.
[209] RIT (n 206) 10.

his family:

> Here in the camp, we do not feel safe. We are permanently stressed. I don't remember any time to be relaxed here. There are fights (…) The police didn't do anything. We had to stay in front of the houses to protect our families. Even I had to be ready to fight. You see we escaped from war just to be in danger in Europe.[210]

This highlights that being stuck in prolonged sites of displacement seriously threatens the mental and physical wellbeing of refugees. Loescher and others explain that 'protracted refugee situations represent a significant challenge to both human rights and security'.[211] Moreover, the constant feeling of uncertainty and unsafety without any authority protection makes the Diavata camp a zone of indistinction, where the state of exception has become the rule.[212] As Edkins argues, 'the distinction between the rule of law and chaos disappears: decisions about life and death are entirely arbitrary, and everything is possible'.[213] Here, life in a zone of indistinction affects not only the experiences of refugees but also their very being. As O'Reilly explains, a 'chronic sense of fear, insecurity, invisibility and a highly controlled existence are lived and internalized' resulting in a state of 'ontological liminality'.[214]

5.1.4 Permanent temporariness

Most of all, the residents define their time in the Diavata camp as endless waiting in times of extreme uncertainty. Habid (a Syrian man) describes his life in the camp as 'just waiting and wasting time'. Here, Tsoni explains that the protracted refugee situations lead to the 'gradual socio-spatial and temporal "stretching" of liminality from a transitional phase towards a condition of permanent and portable liminality'.[215]

[210] RSA and Pro Asyl (n 200) 12.

[211] Elizabeth Ferris, 'Protracted Refugee Situations, Human Rights and Civil Society' in Gil Loescher and others, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications* (United Nations UP 2008) 78.

[212] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford UP 1998).

[213] Jenny Edkins, 'Sovereign Power, Zones of Indistinction, and the Camp' (2000) 25 Alternatives: global, local, political 3, 6.

[214] Zoe O'Reilly, '"Living Liminality": Everyday Experiences of Asylum Seekers in the "Direct Provision" System in Ireland' (2018) 25 Gender, Place and Culture : A Journal of Feminist Geography 821, 821.

[215] Ioanna Tsoni, '"They Won't Let Us Come, They Won't Let Us Stay, They Won't Let Us Leave". Liminality in the Aegean Borderscape: The Case of Irregular Migrants, Volunteers and Locals on Lesvos' (2016) 9(2) Human Geography 35.

Ziryan (a Kurdish man) explains that there is no work for him here: 'I tried to find work, but I could not find any'. For him, not having work and having no prospects of work makes the days feel endless. RSA and Pro Asyl outline that 'the lack of prospects and absence of regular language lessons in the camp dashed their hopes for a better future'.[216] Here, Behruz (an Afghani man) shares his views in an interview: 'I don't see a future. I can only give up. My days in the camp pass by without any change of my situation. During the day, I sit on a chair in front of the isobox and at night I try for hours to fall asleep. There are no lessons now, no measures to make a living, nothing'.[217]

Reports indicate that 'refugees and asylees are left stuck in camps waiting to renew their police notes for the second or third time'.[218] In an interview with RSA and Pro Asyl, Suleiman (an Afghani man) explains that 'I applied for family reunification as soon as I arrived in the mainland. I want to bring them to safety. It has been 16 months since I applied. But I have no answer. I am spending days and nights worrying about them. They are in danger'.[219] Loescher and others find that 'the vast majority of these refugees have been in exile for many years'.[220] Hyndman highlights that refugees living in camps find themselves 'stuck in legal limbo without most of the basic human rights to mobility, work, and residence'.[221] Overall, scholars focussing on protracted refugee situations point out that refugee camps are often introduced as temporary solutions, but in reality remain in place for prolonged periods of time and under pressing circumstances.[222] Hence, life in the refugee camp represents a state of 'permanent temporariness', placing the refugee in a position of prolonged temporal and spatial liminality.[223]

[216] RSA and Pro Asyl (n 200) 12.
[217] ibid.
[218] RIT (n 206) 19.
[219] RSA and Pro Asyl (n 200) 22.
[220] Loescher and others, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications* (n 211) 3.
[221] Jennifer Hyndman, 'A Refugee Camp Conundrum: Geopolitics, Liberal Democracy, and Protracted Refugee Situations' (2011) 28(2) Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 7, 12.
[222] Jeff Crisp, 'Conference Papers: 4. The Nature and Consequences of Protracted Crises No Solutions in Sight: The Problem of Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa' (2003) 22 Refugee Survey Quarterly 114; Gil Loescher and others, 'Protracted Refugee Situations and the Regional Dynamics of Peacebuilding: Opinion' (2007) 7 Conflict, security & development 491; Loescher and others, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications* (n 211); Hyndman ibid.
[223] Bailey and others (2002) as cited in O'Reilly (n 214) 827.

In conclusion, the difficult living conditions, combined with threats and hostility received from the camp manager and police, create a 'zone of indistinction' in which the refugees have become the embodiment of the 'exception'. The permanent temporariness that comes with the uncertainty and insecurities of life in the Diavata camp creates temporal and spatial liminality, where a constant factor of fear adds another layer of ontological liminality.

5.2 Experiences in the Casa Base safe space

During my first visits to the Diavata camp area, all the women and girls talked about were their experiences at *Kasabassa.* I soon found out that they referred to the 'Casa Base' safe space for women and girls that is located next to the Diavata camp, which organises educational and recreational activities and provides medical support where necessary. In this way, *Kasabassa* provides an imaginary, temporary break from the 'liminality' and 'exception' that defines the refugee camp by offering a sense of belonging. Whereas the residents cherish the presence of *Kasabassa* and the support provided by Maurice, their presence and informal privileges in the Diavata camp indicate a complex relationship between humanitarian aid and the camp authorities.

Figure 14: The entrance of the Casa Base safe space.

Figure 15: The outdoor playground of the Casa Base safe space.

5.2.1 Introducing the safe space Kasabassa

QRT is an international NGO that aims to provide 'direct and concrete help directly in the camps with their basic and essential needs'.[224] It is an emergency relief organisation that has been involved at the Diavata camp since 2017.[225] Although QRT was initially located in one of the buildings within the refugee camp, it moved to a 1000m² abandoned industrial warehouse right next to the camp. QRT transformed it into a welcoming place and safe space for the women and girls living in the Diavata camp, who can visit any time during the day.[226] *Kasabassa* is a colourful place, with brightly painted walls and art decorations everywhere (Figure 14 and Figure 15). The outside area has a playground and a green garden. *Kasabassa* offers educational and

[224] QRT, 'About QRT' (*Quick Response Team*, 2021) <http://quickresponseteam.gr/en/about qrt/> accessed 1 June 2021.

[225] According to the QRT, they are 'financed almost exclusively by private donations before, during and/or after their experience in Thessaloniki'. QRT, 'Help Our Mission' (*Quick Response Team*, 2021) <http://quickresponseteam.gr/en/help our mission/> accessed 9 July 2021.

[226] UNHCR estimates that of the Diavata camp residents, 32% are men, 20% are women and 28% are children. Many women and girls visit *Kasabassa*, although the exact numbers fluctuate depending on the day. UNHCR, 'Protection Monitoring Tool: Open Reception Facilities (Sites) in the Mainland' (UNHCR September 2018) 8 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67420> accessed 4 May 2021.

recreational activities, which includes language courses (eg English and German), creative workshops (eg painting and photography) and self-development training (eg yoga). Every time the girls speak about *Kasabassa* they sound very happy. Sana (an Iraqi girl) tells me that 'at *Kasabassa* we are having a lot of fun, we go there every day and do a lot of activities'. QRT outlines that the aim of Casa Base is:

> To have spaces where activities can be carried out as well as to allow the girls and women living in the camp to have a Safe Space in which to rest and enjoy themselves without the burden of all that they have had to endure so far and that they continue to endure. [This] increases the sense of well-being of these girls and removes the dangers of boredom, forced idleness and lack of stimulation, which unfortunately characterize life in the refugee camps.[227]

Maurice explains: 'I want to give them a 5-star service opposite to the camp and *Kasabassa* is the place where the refugee women and girls realise what it is like to be welcomed'.[228] Contrary to their experience in the refugee camp, the women and girls explain that they **are** welcomed at *Kasabassa*. Fatima (a Syrian girl) and Seyda (a Kurdish girl) describe it as a 'break' from their endurance in the Diavata camp. Hence, visiting *Kasabassa* creates an imaginary, temporary break from their experiences of 'liminality' and 'exception' in the Diavata camp. As Wels and others explain, the liminal personae are in a stage of ambiguity of 'no longer' but also 'not yet'.[229] However, at *Kasabassa* the women and girls do get a sense of belonging, both socially through the community and spatially in safe space. In their essence, these women and girls still do not 'belong' in a way that takes them out of their state of prolonged liminality, as that entails the continuation of their 'rite of passage'. This would require a passage in status, place or situation that only the Greek government can offer, by providing the refugees with citizenship or another solution.[230] Hence, the women and girls still do not **belong** in the broadest sense of society, but they do perceive their time at *Kasabassa* as a valuable,

[227] QRT, 'Activities: Casa Base' (*Quick Response Team*, 2021) <http://quickresponseteam.gr/en/casa base 2/> accessed 1 June 2021.

[228] This view closely resonates with the argument presented by Marc Augé, *Non Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (John Howe tr, Verso 1995) 111 that 'the non place is the opposite of utopia'.

[229] Harry Wels and others, 'Victor Turner and Liminality: An Introduction' (2011) 34 Anthropology Southern Africa 1, 1.

[230] Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts, 'Liminality' in James D Wright (ed), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd edn, Elsevier 2015) 132.

temporary belonging.[231]

Besides a sense of belonging, QRT aims to make an impact on another fundamental, even ontological level. The keywords I hear from the QRT volunteers when they talk about their work and interaction with the women and girls are empowerment, potential and independence. QRT states that '[a]mong our main objectives that of restoring dignity, self-esteem and happiness to people living in refugee camps is the most important and only by being present for a long time, with constancy, can people's lives be changed'.[232]

As the safe space is only for women and girls, the empowerment has a gendered component, where Maurice and the QRT volunteers actively cherish the potential of the women and girls who visit.[233] Maurice explains that 'we try to motivate the girls and tell them how great they are'. During my visit, I see this philosophy in action when Maurice introduces me to Shirin (an Afghani girl) and describes all the things she is good at. For example, she is praised as a talented sportswoman and will soon start playing in a professional football team in Thessaloniki. Shirin listens to the shower of compliments quietly and looks a bit shy. Maurice explains that she came to the camp four years ago. She is 17 years old now, speaks several languages and is more confident than ever. She became one of the 'supporters' for the younger girls and always helps the people around her. The supporters have a special area upstairs in the *Kasabassa* building, where only girls from 14 years and older are allowed, who can wear QRT jackets and are a part of the organisation. This shows that it is a space where everything is directed at making the women and girls feel powerful and believe in themselves.

In a testimonial, volunteer Ana explains that 'through QRT we are able to give love and attention to children, support to parents, and as far as possible some dignity to families'.[234] According to Loescher and others, it is the NGOs who are 'left to cope with caring for these

[231] In other words, humanitarianism is always about liminality; it is about survival and deals with basic needs rather than systematic solutions.

[232] QRT, 'About QRT' (n 224).

[233] Maurice explains that limiting the safe space to women and girls was the only way for them to feel comfortable and free, as norms and behaviour in the Diavata camp itself are largely dictated by the male residents. QRT does make visits to the Diavata camp to reach out to the men and boys who do not visit *Kasabassa*. Other NGOs working inside the Diavata camp do not discriminate based on gender, so the men and boys do have access to their services.

[234] QRT, 'Testimonials' (*Quick Response Team*, 2021) <http://quickresponseteam.gr/en/testimonials/> accessed 12 July 2021.

forgotten populations and attempt to mitigate the negative implications of prolonged exile'.[235] Nevertheless, they emphasise that this does not 'constitute a durable solution for protracted refugee situations'. In other words, it is not a solution but it is a form of relief.

5.2.2 Communication: English as a common language

Many children in the Diavata camp have lived in different countries and have been on the move since they fled their home countries. Most of them have learned one or more languages during these years abroad, which means they speak and understand many languages. Even just in the refugee camp, they explain that they have picked up languages from their friends, started learning Greek or follow other language classes at *Kasabassa*. Fatima (a Syrian girl) and Seyda (a Kurdish girl) became close friends since they both started living in the camp. Fatima tells me that 'at the beginning we would only play together without talking, as we didn't speak the same language'. However, as all girls are going to *Kasabassa* and follow English classes there, 'we can now communicate with each other in English'. The girls and women going to *Kasabassa* have English as their common language now, in addition to other languages they may share. This means that through *Kasabassa*, English became the neutral, common language that connects and unites them.

In contrast, many male residents of the refugee camp do not seem to have a language in common, which makes it more difficult to communicate with each other. In an interview with RSA and Pro Asyl, Suleiman (an Afghani man) explains that: 'After all this, the Greek government didn't do anything for me to learn the language, to find a job and a place to stay. We all speak our own languages here until today: Dari, Farsi, Arabic, Kurdish'.[236] Accordingly, the women and girls have a significant advantage compared to their male counterparts, and can take on the communication between different groups of people due to the English skills they developed at *Kasabassa*. These language skills will help them socialise in future destinations as well, which highlights a gendered alleviation of potentials and possibilities.

[235] Loescher and others, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications* (n 211) 4.
[236] RSA and Pro Asyl (n 200) 22.

5.2.3 Support in the Diavata camp

The presence of *Kasabassa* and particularly Maurice is also felt within the refugee camp. Maurice is the NGO coordinator of QRT since they started working in the Diavata camp. He is an Italian man who has been living in Greece for the past six years. He explains that he loves these people and spends a lot of his time with them. When I ask Sayed (an Afghani man) about the presence of NGOs in the camp, he only starts speaking about Maurice and QRT. He says that 'Maurice is the only mercy that God gave us here; without him, it would be unliveable'. Several times a day, Maurice drives into the camp with his medical car (which is easily recognised by the green QRT stickers), to speak to the residents, provide first aid if necessary, and deliver medicine or other things the residents asked him to bring. During my visit, residents approach him with a range of questions, concerns, and requests: A boy comes to ask for a bandage for his parents, a woman asks for painkillers, a father asks for diapers for his baby. Maurice points out the tension between the long-term, quality services QRT provides and the short-term, cheaper approach the government takes:

> We are the ones giving them [residents] medicine. Many people ask for anti-depressants. But we also give them better food packages. We notice that if you give people better quality food, their health is also at a better base level so our medical costs go down. If you increase the base quality of their lives, all the other things that you're constantly trying to rush and fix won't be a problem anymore because people will be more healthy and happy generally.

Residents share that sometimes there are fires in the Diavata camp. QRT has put two fire extinguishers in the camp so that the residents can take down the fires themselves. This gives them the agency to react appropriately when needed, instead of calling the security who is also not prepared and awaiting their handling of the situation. This gives agency to the residents and, accordingly, counters what Kubo describes as internalised 'refugeeness' that only considers refugees' vulnerability and dependency.[237] Hence, this approach of empowerment is another way of taking seriously the long-term investments in the refugee camp and its residents, not only materially but also practically.

[237] Tadayuki Kubo, 'Toward an Anthropological Study of Refugees: Anthropology at a Refugee Camps' (2010) 75 Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology 146, 159.

In conclusion, the refugee women and girls describe their experiences at *Kasabassa* very positively. In contrast to the refugee camp, *Kasabassa* provides a sense of belonging, which creates an imaginary, temporary break from the 'liminality' and 'exception' that defines their experiences in the Diavata camp. QRT also provides support within the Diavata camp and, thereby, tries to invest in the agency rather than the refugee-ness of its residents. Nevertheless, QRT has to make the decision to not criticise the camp authorities in order to sustain informal privileges that enable them to support the residents of the Diavata camp.

5.3 Negotiating a new normality

During my visit, I asked the friends Fatima (a Syrian girl) and Seyda (a Kurdish girl) how they would describe both sites in three words. For the Diavata camp, they said 'boring, bad, fights' – elaborating on their experiences living in the refugee camp. For *Kasabassa*, they made a smart joke saying 'everything, is and good' but after a moment of laughter, they said 'entertainment, a break and joy'. Hence, building upon the previous chapters, the Diavata camp symbolises and materialises a feeling of **exception**, whereas *Kasabassa* embodies a feeling of **belonging**. These contradictory sites existing next to each other give the refugee women and girls the agency (ie a 'free pass') to navigate their position between the boredom and suffering in the Diavata camp, and the imaginary, temporary breaks from liminality offered by *Kasabassa*. The interaction and passage between these very distinct sites located in such proximity of each other (Figure 16 and Figure 17) create a continuous negotiation of a 'new normality' for its residents.

Figure 16: Location of the Casa Base safe space with respect to the Diavata camp.

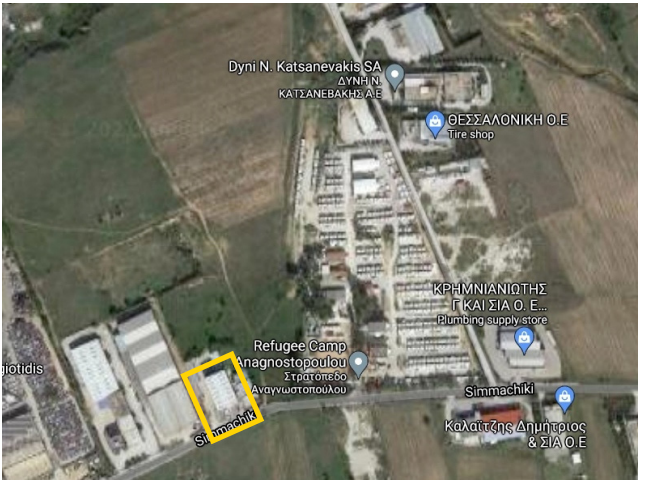


Figure 17: View on the Diavata camp from the Casa Base safe space garden.

5.3.1 The symbiosis of Kasabassa and the Diavata camp

As the refugee women and girls from the Diavata camp visit *Kasabassa* on a daily basis, the two distinct social and spatial sites continuously interact with each other. As *Kasabassa* works on empowering and developing the potential of the women and girls, this translates into their level of confidence and skills. Hence, some aspects of their personalities and characteristics are stimulated and become more prominent, which expresses itself not only in the *Kasabassa* site but also when they return to the Diavata camp. The social norms and dynamics of *Kasabassa* thus impact those of the Diavata camp, as also happens vice versa. Maurice explains that 'we try to motivate the girls and tell them how great they are, but their families are not always seeing their full potential'. QRT sometimes hears back from the mothers who visit *Kasabassa* that this has an impact on the girls' behaviour at home. For example, they start talking back to their fathers, who are culturally the head of the family. In turn, it is the mothers who come to *Kasabassa* and say 'please do not tell them this, it creates trouble in the family'.

Maurice explains that 'in the beginning, fathers didn't allow their daughters to come to *Kasabassa*, but it changed when they were shown how much they [the girls] are improving'. Some residents of the Diavata camp regarded *Kasabassa* with suspicion, as it was not clear what exactly the intentions were. This was especially the case for male residents, who were not allowed to enter the safe space themselves. When Maurice realised some girls were not allowed to come to *Kasabassa* at all, he would go to the refugee camp to talk to their fathers: 'I would invite them to *Kasabassa* to show them around, to make them see with their own eyes what we are doing in here and how much it empowers the girls'. Usually, the fathers then started allowing their female family members to visit *Kasabassa.* During our conversation, Maurice wonders out loud: 'Why would they [fathers] build walls in a place that already has so many walls? They have the chance to break down at least some of these walls'. This highlights a socio-cultural tension, continuous negotiation and a complicated relationship between the two sites. Here, the fact that the women and girls are able to move freely between *Kasabassa* and the Diavata camp gives them the agency or a 'free pass' to navigate between two sets of very different experiences.

5.3.2 'Normality' in liminality

When I arrive at the refugee camp area, Rozhin (a Syrian girl) and her sister Rewan ask me how I am doing. After saying I am doing fine, I ask them how they are doing and how their day is going so far. They tell me they spotted a butterfly. This shows me that, for children, many small daily realities revolve around things that other children who do not live in a refugee camp also experience. After elaborating on the colour and size of the butterfly, Rozhin offers me something to drink: 'Do you want water? We have a lot of water!' Her father offers a cigarette, which I kindly decline. Similarly, Ziryan (a Kurdish man) wants to make me 'the best coffee I ever tasted'. These are very common, daily interactions of genuine kindness. The family of Fatima (a Syrian girl) bakes bread in the refugee camp and sells it to other residents. Besides that, there are mini-markets where people can buy a variety of things. The people running the mini-markets would buy their goods in Thessaloniki and resell them in the camp. A report by Refugees in Towns explains that:

> Such businesses are usually small shops in Diavata Camp that sell cigarettes, chocolates, bread, and other goods to refugees. Most do not obtain permits to sell such products, but there are no police inside the camp and few barriers to starting such businesses. Refugees prefer to buy items more cheaply inside the camp, rather than outside, where they would also face language barriers.[238]

This illustrates that over time, new forms of hospitality, cooperation and economy have evolved; by offering water, cigarettes or coffee, and by establishing a network of informal mini-markets. According to Turner, those in liminality 'are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, conversation and ceremonial'.[239] I agree with Turner that 'their condition is poverty' and that the residents living in refugee camps are trapped by an in-between condition without the social, spatial or legal possibility to move on. However, based on participant-observation and conversations with residents, it is important to highlight that alternative norms, roles and customs have been established in the refugee camp. In other words, one could argue that

[238] RIT (n 206) 13.
[239] Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti Structure* (Aldine Publishing Company 1969) 95.

new forms of 'normality' have been negotiated within the spheres of liminality. Hence, although biopolitics controls the lives of the residents of the Diavata camp, within this context, there is still the possibility of agency and negotiation. What exactly this 'normality' should be has been complicated by the *Kasabassa* and Diavata camp dynamics, as the symbiosis between the two sites creates a continuous negotiation between different sets of norms and experiences.

Overall, this shows the ability of humans to create a sense of normality even in the most difficult and socially diverse contexts, such as the permanent liminality in a refugee camp hosting many different languages and nationalities. However, it is important to point out that such forms of normality (as present in the refugee camp) and the preconditions upon which they exist are not actually 'normal' in societies where liminality does not predominate, such as the village Diavata. For example, volunteer Alessandra explains in a testimonial that:

> They are normal people who spend their lives in a context that is not normal at all. It's not normal that people are living crammed into containers, it's not normal that there are families living in tents with no electricity while it's close to 40 degrees outside, it's not normal that volunteers have to carry blocks of ice to them in a wheelbarrow because they don't have a refrigerator to store food.[240]

Thus, even where residents have established new forms of normality, this is still within a social and spatial site where, amongst others, the poor living conditions and feeling of exclusion continuously reproduce abnormality. Gren acknowledges the complex existence of '"normality" in a violent and prolonged refugee situation'.[241] She explains that in times of crisis, the concept of normality and the boundaries of 'the normal' are extended. Based on this, Gren argues that 'normalizing is one means used by the refugees (…) to deal with the violence of everyday life'.[242] In this context, the liminality of the Diavata camp also became the daily reality and new 'normality' of its residents, who are all stuck in protracted refugee situations. Amid such complex and challenging circumstances, babies are being born, children are growing

[240] QRT, 'Testimonials' (n 234).
[241] Nina Gren, *Occupied Lives: Maintaining Integrity in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in the West Bank* (OUP 2015) 11.
[242] ibid 13.

up and adults are growing old. What happens if you are a young child growing up in liminality? Possibly, for these children the norms and codes of the refugee camp become their only reality, as you cannot miss what you do not know. On the contrary, it might be that the awareness and ability of comparison with a real, normal life is more pressing on the parents, who are conscious of being 'betwixt and between'.[243]

5.3.3 Exception versus belonging

As has been pointed out before, it is also important to stress that the 'belonging' offered by *Kasabassa* is a temporary one and exists only within the realm of exclusion. The residents experiencing a sense of belonging and care at *Kasabassa* does not mean they are **belonging** in the wider sense of the word, as structural conditions prevent refugees from participation, for example, in mainstream education and work. Hence, in reality they are still barred from getting a chance of belonging in Greece or other EU countries, whether legally, socially, culturally, linguistically, economically or otherwise. This is to say that I do not want to romanticise these moments of alleviated exception or respite experienced at *Kasabassa*. Nevertheless, on an interpersonal and community level these are meaningful experiences of belonging, which give a sense of agency and empowerment to the refugee women and girls even if it is just in an imaginary, temporary setting.

The women and girls themselves are very aware of this. One day when I visit *Kasabassa*, I am invited to the screening of a movie that was made by six girls in the cinematography club. The movie articulates how they experience life in the camp. One of the girls in the movie says 'I feel like a bird who is neither free nor captured'. Another girl says 'nobody is free here, nobody is interested'. This emphasises the multi-layered liminal situation they experience in their daily lives. In a conversation afterwards, the girls tell me how grateful they are for getting the chance to develop their cinematography skills, which I previously also heard from the girls in the photography club. They share that it helps them reflect on their situation and capture their experiences in a universal language; namely that of images. Other women and girls also emphasise

[243] Victor Witter Turner, 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage' in Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster and Meredith Little, *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation* (Open Court Publishing 1994)

the universality of their skills, as they learn arts, dancing and sports at *Kasabassa* – which are all things that do not require a language.[244]

As previously mentioned, Shirin (an Afghani girl) is a talented football player. Soon, she will start playing in the women's football team of Thessaloniki, which means the sports skills she gained at *Kasabassa* are directly creating a bridge between the exclusion of the Diavata camp and socialisation with peers in Greek society. Shirin explains that 'wherever I go next, I know I will find a ball and the people to play, which gives me confidence that everything will be fine in the end'. Similarly, a few older girls from the photography club made friends in their high school in Thessaloniki based on their shared interest in capturing images. After Fatima (a Syrian girl) shared her social media accounts, she explains that the Greek peers were very impressed and 'instantly wanted to befriend me'. In other words, the women and girls feel that the skills they develop at *Kasabassa* puts them at an advantage and gives them the tools necessary to integrate, both in Greece and potential future destinations. This shows that *Kasabassa* also provides an imaginary hope that in the future, they will find a place where they will belong – this time in the broadest sense of the word.[245]

In conclusion, the women and girls have the agency to move freely between *Kasabassa* and the Diavata camp, which creates socio-cultural tension, continuous negotiation and a complicated relationship between these contradictory sites. The interaction and passage between the two spaces generates a symbiosis between different sets of experiences, which influences the alternative norms, roles and customs that have been established in the Diavata camp. Nevertheless, the new sense of 'normality' that has been created only exists within the spheres of liminality. Similarly, although *Kasabassa* provides a sense of belonging for the women and girls who visit, such belonging exists only in the realm of exclusion.

[244] Note that most women and girls do in fact speak multiple languages.

[245] Unfortunately, this is imaginary, as it remains unclear how many and which of the residents I spoke to will actually receive asylum. Given the strict migration policies the EU has adopted, there is a serious risk of being sent back home, after all those years of waiting in liminality.

6.

THE WALL: THE CAMP AS AN OCCUPIED ENCLAVE

Όσο ψηλώνουν οι φράχτες, τόσο βελτιώνονται οι άλτες

The taller the fences, the better the jumpers

This chapter explores the psychological effects and the practical implications of the new, three-metre high concrete wall that was built around the Diavata camp in the period of my fieldwork. First, the chapter discusses the justification and information regarding the construction of the wall and, consequently, its impact on the refugees. It argues that the recent decision of the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum completes the biopolitical project of all-encompassing control on its subjects and finalises the making of the Diavata camp into a fully occupied enclave. The wall being built is a sign of permanence in a site of prolonged displacement and liminality, while the government uses rhetoric of temporality to justify the shortcomings of the Diavata camp. Second, the chapter discusses the residents' responses to the new, three-metre high concrete wall that radically alters the architecture of the Diavata camp, where residents try to incorporate, resist or accept its presence. Third, the chapter examines how residents of the Diavata camp relate themselves to 'the future' and the possibilities of escaping liminality. Here, it discusses residents' ideas about what the future looks like, with the awareness that their daily experiences are defined by endless waiting and uncertainties. Overall, this chapter contributes to the thesis by providing an insight into refugees' experiences of temporality while the Diavata camp is becoming more securitised and fortified. As this is a policy trend in all refugee camps in Greece, on the mainland and the islands, it is valuable to understand the impact of these developments on the experiences of refugees.

6.1 The wall: A sign of permanence, capturing a timeless space

One day, upon my arrival at the Diavata camp area I saw what looked like the construction of a concrete wall around the parameters of the refugee camp (Figure 18), a few metres outside of the guarded fence that was already in place. This was to my surprise, as this had not been publicly announced. It is important to note that the new, three-metre high concrete wall made it impossible to see what is going on in the refugee camp, with the exception of a few parts that consist of three-metre high steel bars, which also significantly block the view. Hence, the construction majorly impacted both the Diavata camp and its residents by radically altering its architecture into a more securitised and occupied form. The psychological effects and practical consequences this has on its residents make the experiences in the refugee camp resemble those of necropolitics. Accordingly, the new, concrete wall completes the biopolitical project of all-encompassing control on its subjects and finalises the making of the Diavata camp into a fully occupied enclave. Furthermore, the wall also has an antithetical temporal dimension, as the shortcomings in the Diavata camp are often excused by its 'temporary presence' but the construction of a wall is in itself a sign of permanence.

Figure 18: Construction of the west side of the wall on 29 April 2021.

Figure 19: Construction of the east side of the wall on 20 May 2021.

6.1.1 The construction of the wall

The Greek Council for Refugees reports that in April 2021 'works had commenced on the construction of 2.5 to 3-metre concrete walls' around the mainland refugee camps Diavata, Ritsona, and Nea Kavala (Figure 18 and Figure 19).[246] This came as a surprise to many, including the residents of the Diavata camp and the camp employees, who 'were reportedly not informed of the initiative'. The Ministry of Migration and Asylum issued a tender for the 'fencing works and installation of security infrastructure (…) aimed at enhancing security in the Migrant Accommodation Structures'.[247] This reflects the wider migration policies which the Greek liberal-conservative New Democracy government has been implementing since they took office on 8 July 2019.[248] Based on

[246] Greek Council for Refugees, 'Conditions in Reception Facilities' (*Asylum in Europe: Country Report Greece*, 10 June 2021) <http://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception conditions/housing/conditions reception facilities/> accessed 12 June 2021.10 June 2021

[247] ibid.

[248] Since Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis took office, he 'is trying to draw a balance between tougher rules and conditions in camps for asylum seekers, and not imitating far right, xenophobic parties like Golden Dawn and Greek Solution'. POLITICO, 'Greek Conservatives Agitate for Drastic Response on Refugees' (*POLITICO*, 10 December 2019) <https://politico.eu/article/migration divides greek government refugees antonis samaras kyriakos mitsotakis syriza/> accessed 25 June 2021.

this, there was a shift in refugee policy, as the government adopted a series of measures with 'a tougher line on migration' and that gave them 'increasing control'.[249] Nevertheless, the decision was supported by the International Organisation for Migration, who published an 'invitation to bid' on 'Construction Works for creation of perimeter fences' in different refugee camps, including the Diavata camp.[250] The Greek company Ellactor was chosen to construct the concrete wall.[251] When I asked one of the construction workers why they were building the wall around the Diavata camp, he said 'these people [pointing at the camp] are trying to go out, they are trying to go away. They are not allowed, so we're building the wall really high. To prevent people from being able to leave'.[252]

According to Maurice, the official justification for the construction given to the residents was that the wall is built 'to protect the people inside from the people outside'. In other words, a sense of securitisation of the outside is used to explain why the refugee camp is being enclosed by a concrete wall. However, the QRT volunteers outline that this is clearly reversed logic from what the government is trying to do in reality. An Italian QRT volunteer elaborates: 'If it is really about security from the outside, why don't they build walls around the Greek villages too?' Nevertheless, for a long time, the justification for the wall remained unclear for the residents of the Diavata camp. When I asked a few Syrian and Kurdish residents about the construction of the wall, Leila (a Syrian woman) tells me that 'they [the government] will turn this camp into an army point, so the camp will be shut down by the end of July'. Others told me the same story, that the wall is built because they

[249] European Data Journalism Network, 'How the Greek Policy on Migration Is Changing' (*European Data Journalism Network*, 27 December 2019) <https://europeandatajournalism.eu/News/Data_news/How_the_Greek_policy_on_migration_is_changing> accessed 25 June 2021. For example, journalists report that the construction of the concrete wall 'seems to be proceeding in parallel with the acceleration of the procedures for closed centers on the islands, but also with the financing of new armament programs for the Coast Guard in order to tighten the border guards and the faster deportation process agreed by the government' (AlterThess, 'Νέος Φράχτης Στο Καμπ Των Διαβατών Προκαλεί Ερωτήματα' (AlterThess.gr *Όλες οι Ειδήσεις από την άλλη Θεσσαλονίκη*, 21 April 2021) <https://alterthess.gr/neos_frachtis_sto_kamp_ton_diavaton_prokalei_erotimata/> accessed 30 April 2021).

[250] International Organization for Migration (IOM), 'Invitation to Bid' (IOM: The UN Migration Agency, 5 January 2021) <https://greece.iom.int/sites/greece/files/Invitation%20Letter_20.pdf> accessed 30 April 2021.

[251] AlterThess (n 249).

[252] For the record, he said this as the explanation of the construction of the wall, not as his personal opinion. In fact, he added that he was not happy about it.

are transforming it into an army ground. On the contrary, Ziryan (a Kurdish man) says:

> They are building the wall so that people [outside] cannot see what is behind it. They cannot take pictures and they cannot see that there is a problem hiding behind the wall. Instead of dealing with the problem, let us just hide the problem so that people wouldn't feel sorry for us or do something for us. Just hide us behind a wall and let us just die here in the end.

Here, Ziryan uses rhetoric that highlights the imminent threat he associates with the construction of the concrete wall. More specifically, he underscores two important aspects. Firstly, that the concrete wall around the Diavata camp will increase their invisibility to the outside world. This means that the residents will enter a new stage of exclusion, where they are not only disregarded anymore, as they currently experience, but simply forgotten. Ziryan believes that this 'forgetting' does not take place through a natural course, but instead is the active policy by the Greek government who wants to 'hide the problem so that people wouldn't feel sorry for us'. In other words, this policy and practise of exclusion creates the preconditions for a societal oblivion. Hyndman argues that, as a consequence, humanitarian crises become a silent emergency as displacement is contained and hidden in refugee camps.[253] According to Mbembe, this is the essence of what refugee camps perform are in the west; they are the solution for 'keeping away what disturbs, for containing or rejecting all excess'.[254] Secondly, Ziryan says that by hiding refugees behind the concrete wall, the government can 'let us just die here'. Here, Mbembe explains that 'the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die' is the necropolitical power of the state.[255] Even when not literally executed, the hostility and threats residents receive from authorities, combined with the knowledge that their lives **are** in their hands, is enough for the concrete wall to create a fear for necropolitical practises.

Overall, residents gave a variety of reasons for the construction of the wall according to their own understanding of the situation. This highlights the lack of communication about what is going to happen and why. NGOs who contacted the Ministry of Migration and Asylum

[253] Jennifer Hyndman, 'A Refugee Camp Conundrum: Geopolitics, Liberal Democracy, and Protracted Refugee Situations' (2011) 28(2) Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 7, 8.
[254] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Steven Corcoran tr, Duke UP 2019) 60.
[255] ibid 66.

about the reason for the new walls report that 'refugee camps would become closed and contained (…) to strengthen the sense of security for all involved, both local communities and camp residents. No one will be able to enter or leave'.[256] This shows that the sense of security is highlighted as a key motivation by the Greek government. Similarly, scholars find that security concerns about migrants and refugees often influence policy processes towards increased securitisation practises.[257] Focussing on the securitisation of migration in Greece, Karyotis argues that political elites 'create an image of an enemy which is largely independent of the objective significance of a threat'.[258] This means it is a matter of perceived rather than an actual threat that justifies securitisation, which also relates to the construction of walls around refugee camps.

When I ask Maurice about the construction of the wall, he explains that 'there is an official rumour that a magnetic card system will be put in place, which would track and trace when people are leaving and coming in'. This means that 'everyone is under control and the camp manager will be able to see time stamps of refugees' movement'. Later, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum stated that, indeed, 'all facilities will be modernized [and] all facilities will have a perimeter fence, an electronic entry-exit system and individual entry-exit cards'.[259] This shows that the concrete wall completes the biopolitical project of all-encompassing control on its subjects and, accordingly, contributes to the material architecture of occupation that makes the Diavata camp a fully occupied enclave. Brankamp emphasises that such securitisation measures 'produce violent spatial effects of immobility, exclusion, and exception'.[260] In this context, other sources report that even more far-reaching measures are on the agenda: 'Drones patrolling from the sky, magnetic gates with integrated thermographic cameras, X-ray machines

[256] Anastasia Misbach, '"We Call It 'Modernization'" – Reception Centers for Migrants Will Be "Closed" Facilities' (*Solomon*, 10 May 2021) <https://wearesolomon.com/mag/lab/we call it modernization reception centers for migrants will be closed facilities/> accessed 24 June 2021.

[257] Jef Huysmans, 'The European Union and the Securitization of Migration' (2000) 38 Journal of Common Market Studies 751; Georgios Karyotis, 'Securitization of Migration in Greece: Process, Motives, and Implications' (2012) 6 International Political Sociology 390; Polly Pallister Wilkins, 'Interrogating the Mediterranean "Migration Crisis"' (2016) 21 Mediterranean Politics 311.

[258] Karyotis (n 257) 390.

[259] Misbach (n 256).

[260] Hanno Brankamp, '"Occupied Enclave": Policing and the Underbelly of Humanitarian Governance in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya' (2019) 71 Political Geography 67, 67.

and security cameras at the entry and exit points are just some tools that are planned to be implemented'.[261]

Figure 20: The concrete wall enclosing the Diavata camp.

Figure 21: The concrete wall with a watchtower inside the Diavata camp.

[261] Alexia Kalaitzi and Katy Fallon, 'Concrete Walls and Drones: Greek Plans for Refugee Camps Decried' (*Al Jazeera*, 25 May 2021) <https://aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/25/concrete walls and drones greek plans for refugee camps decried> accessed 25 June 2021.

6.1.2 The impact of the wall

Many residents tell me that psychologically speaking there is a big effect of having the three-metre high concrete wall enclosing the Diavata camp (Figure 20 and Figure 21). It is important to highlight that this wall is built in addition to the guarded, metal wire fence. In an interview with Solomon, Denise (an Afghani woman) describes the Diavata camp as 'a prison, the only difference is that criminals are alone in prison, and we are in small military bases with our families'.[262] Similarly, in an interview with Al Jazeera, Diyar (an Iraqi man) explains: 'I am a human being, I don't need a wall. They make me feel like a prisoner'.[263] This shows that everyone is seriously affected by the concrete wall as it underscores and finalises their position of ultimate exclusion. The concrete wall also adds another layer of control for the camp authorities, who now have a fully flashed biopolitical apparatus to supervise the refugees and their movement. Moreover, Maurice explains that most likely only residents who are officially registered at the Diavata camp will be able to come in once the construction is finalised, due to the personalised magnetic cards required for entry and exit through the main gate. Hence, those who are currently living in the improvised camping tents might be excluded from the system and not be able to return once they leave the camp. As previously mentioned, these informal residents are already harassed by police, but this practise is no longer needed when their exclusion is formalised and institutionalised. Here, Brown argues that:

> Political walls have always spectacularized power – they have always generated performative and symbolic effects in excess of their obdurately material ones. They have produced and negated certain political imaginaries. They have contributed to the political subjectivity of those they encompass and those they exclude.[264]

This shows that walls perform functions that are not just material and physical, but also largely symbolic and psychological. Walls thereby directly impact those subjected to their presence, as also becomes clear during conversations with residents of the Diavata camp.

[262] Misbach (n 256).
[263] Kalaitzi and Fallon (n 261).
[264] Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (Zone Books 2010) 39.

Nevertheless, the advent of the concrete wall was an overall silent development: its construction simply started without any moral outrage or protest in the village Diavata or the wider Greek society. Possibly, the reason is simply that the construction of the wall around the Diavata camp was unknown to them. Nevertheless, AlterThess forecasts that the wall 'is going to intensify the exclusion of refugees from the rest of society'.[265] Simultaneously, the wall fails to provide a feeling of 'security' for the residents of the Diavata camp and 'instead turn the hours and days of 'temporary' waiting into a daily punishment'.[266] In other words, the concrete wall directly translates into more exclusion and fewer rights for the residents of the refugee camp. Here, Maurice shares his opinion about the wall and says that:

> If you go to Thessaloniki and treat a dog in a bad way and put it in a small cage, people will get mad. But if it is people who are refugees, we don't get mad. They are treated less than humans or even animals. They are without any rights. When you are here, you can just put people in prison like this.

Maurice is concerned that 'nobody is raising questions about this wall being built, which means they [the Greek government] can do it in the future too'. A German QRT volunteer adds that, as a consequence, 'the future of the camp will be like a small prison that removes the human rights aspect of life'. Moreover, she believes that if these developments are not criticised, both within Greece and the wider EU, 'this will be the future of Europe'. In other words, the increased securitisation and silent fortification of refugee camps is seen as a threat not just to the Diavata camp and its residents itself, but also to the wider protection of human rights in the EU and elsewhere. Similarly, NGOs like Solomon argue that the wall 'stands as a daily reminder of an unstable European and Greek immigration policy; invisible to the rest of the world, this "warehouse of souls"'.[267] As Augé phrases it, this is 'where the planet's refugees are parked'.[268] Maurice emphasises that this is an intended policy and poses that 'the wall, the fence, the tents, the food; it's just making them feel more depressed and in jail. The purpose is to make

[265] AlterThess (n 249).
[266] ibid.
[267] Misbach (n 256).
[268] Marc Augé, *Non Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (John Howe tr, Verso 1995) 34.

their lives miserable, to tell others not to come here. Living in the camp is a sum of many troubles that we Europeans make on purpose'.

Maurice explains that 'it is not like refugees only just arrived and we can just say "sorry" for not cleaning; it has been years and we still have people living in refugee camps, because we don't want them here'. As Diken suggests, it is a strategy to keep refugees 'in limbo in sites of confinement'.[269] Moreover, he explains that whereas 'the camp is officially a transitory' but the refugee camp has become a 'permanent location'.[270] Hence, both protracted refugee situations and the walled spaces of liminality are not exceptions anymore, but have become the new norm and thereby embody occupied zones of indistinction.

Moreover, the wall is emblematic for the current political landscape when it comes to time and priorities, as the Ministry of Migration and Asylum has so far refused (or at least neglected) to make long-term investments that improve the quality of life in refugee camps. The shortcomings are often excused by their 'temporary presence'. However, the construction of a concrete wall is both in its physical features and financial cost a sign of permanence.[271] Based on this, the wall has an antithetical temporal dimension, as it materialises an exclusionary refugee policy and simultaneously physically encloses the refugees in a site characterised by permanent liminality, where the living conditions are so poor due to the supposedly 'temporary nature' of the site. Here, it is important to highlight that all of this happened really quickly. This captures the politics of time and priorities as conducted by the Greek government. Maurice shares that 'this is the quickest construction process I have ever witnessed in Greece. When we were waiting for better tents and more food for the refugees, we had to wait for three months. Now, in three weeks' time, they built all of this, the whole wall'.

Maurice explains that QRT has been asking the Greek government for money to invest in long-term improvements aimed at the quality of life in the Diavata camp. He elaborates: 'The ironic side is that when

[269] Bülent Diken, 'From Refugee Camps to Gated Communities: Biopolitics and the End of the City' (2004) 8 Citizenship Studies 83, 92.

[270] ibid 93.

[271] Reportedly the budget for the new concrete walls around the Diavata and a few other refugee camps in mainland Greece is 28,406,664 euros. Τάνια Γεωργιοπούλου, 'Με ταχείς ρυθμούς, χρηματοδότηση για την κατασκευή νέων ΚΥΤ | Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ' (*Kathimerini*, 24 March 2021) <https://kathimerini.gr/society/561305113/me tacheis rythmoys chrimatodotisi gia tin kataskeyi neon kyt/> accessed 30 April 2021.

we want to improve people's lives, we don't find a euro; and when they want to build a wall, they find a million'. In other words, humanitarian organisations are financially struggling to put together food packages and the government rejects their applications for more funding, but does channel the money to build a wall around the camp. Hence, according to Maurice, the construction of the wall is a clear example of the wrong priorities that Greek authorities continuously set. The QRT volunteers agree that 'the wall, it is not what they [the residents] need'. They believe that if the Ministry of Migration and Asylum would set different priorities and make a long-term plan that puts the residents of refugee camps at the centre, they would make long-term investments in peoples' wellbeing rather than the concrete wall. For example, this includes better long-term accommodation and improved access to basic human needs, thereby protecting the human right to live in dignity.

In conclusion, the three-metre high concrete wall around the Diavata camp completes the biopolitical project of all-encompassing control on its subjects and finalises the making of the Diavata camp into a fully occupied enclave. The residents speak in terms of 'a prison' that makes their lives more miserable and forgotten, while describing a fear for hidden necropolitics. Finally, the wall presents an antithetical temporal dimension that highlights the politics of time and priorities conducted by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, since the wall is a sign of permanence capturing a timeless space.

6.2 Dealing with the concrete wall

During our conversations, residents shared a variety of responses to the advent of the three-metre high concrete wall enclosing the Diavata camp. One way to deal with the new wall and the radical alteration of the architecture of the camp is its incorporation into a form of 'normality' which neutralises its presence. Another way of dealing with the wall is its rejection, for example through the resistance of its construction; or on the contrary, the acceptance of the wall as the new reality.

6.2.1 Incorporating the wall: Building a tea house

One way to deal with something new or hostile is to incorporate it into a new 'normality' as a way of neutralising its presence and

reformulating its function. When I meet Ziryan (a Kurdish man), he is walking up and down the road on the east side of the camp, carrying bricks in a wheelbarrow. He explains what he is doing: 'I am trying to build something for my family to enjoy during summer, [a place] to chill out with tea or coffee'. Together with his friend, Ziryan is putting the bricks on the floor [next to the wall] into a nice pattern and he tells me that 'because of the wall, there is going to be shadows' (Figure 22). When I asked him if it is going to be for all the camp residents, he says 'no, no, just for my family'. Ziryan has a wife and three children of the ages one, three and five. He arrived in Greece five years ago and has been living in the Diavata camp for three years now. He tells me 'it is always better to try and make it feel like home'. The fact that he is building a tea house for his family shows that he is working on a project that permeates the future. In this way, he is reinterpreting the wall as a potentiality (eg by offering shadow) to invest in a tea house he can enjoy.

Figure 22: The brick floor of the new tea house built against the wall.

Figure 23: The broken pieces of concrete outside the Diavata camp.

6.2.2 Resistance or acceptance

Another way of dealing with the advent of the wall is to reject its presence and organise resistance together with other residents of the Diavata camp. When I asked Maurice if he knew about any forms of resistance against the wall, he told me that residents are, for now, overtly 'allowing the wall to be built'. However, he explains that:

> One morning, suddenly twenty pieces of the concrete wall were broken. Some children had been playing and jumping on top of a piece and it broke. That is when people realised the material is easily breakable. After this, they have broken twenty pieces overnight, and when they were asked if they knew what happened, nobody had seen or heard anything.

Although most of these pieces were cleared by the time of my visit to the Diavata camp area, there are still some damaged ones lying around the refugee camp (Figure 23).

On the contrary, another response is to simply accept the wall as a new feature of the Diavata camp. Here, Maurice explains that:

> Arabic people would never accept this [the wall]. They would fight and resist, and have previously put the camp on fire because they didn't get food packages. Whereas now there is a lot of Afghani people [in the camp] who are more passive and quiet and sticking to the law and waiting. That doesn't mean they are not acting. It just means they're acting with a more low profile.

Maurice highlights that different (groups of) residents in the Diavata camp deal with the advent of the wall in a variety of ways. However, it is important to keep in mind that 'the international humanitarian organizations administering these camps function under different norms of culture, languages, and politics than the refugees they aid'.[272] Therefore, cross-cultural interpretations and generalisations need to be critically examined, as the camp dynamics in reality may be more complex than observed by Maurice. Nevertheless, as Gren outlines, the residents of refugee camps live 'occupied lives' and, accordingly, their responses can fluctuate between 'resistance and endurance'.[273] Here, Maček explains that it is possible to continuously shift between modes of resistance and acceptance, especially in difficult situations that are, in reality, outside of ones' control.[274]

In conclusion, the three-metre high concrete wall undoubtedly impacted both the refugee camp and its residents. However, its presence around the Diavata camp prompted different responses, which includes the incorporation, rejection and acceptance of the wall in their lives.

6.3 The future: Escaping liminality?

The question remains how residents of the Diavata camp relate themselves to 'the future'. During conversations with the residents of the Diavata camp, it was inevitable to discuss the possibilities and realities of the end to the endless waiting in the refugee camp. Most refugees shared that dreams and expectations are difficult to imagine from a place defined by prolonged liminality. Nevertheless, residents do have ideas about the future and what it could look like, particularly the women and girls who have been developing their skills and were simultaneously exposed to the imaginary, temporary breaks from liminality at *Kasabassa*.

[272] Awa M Abdi, 'In Limbo: Dependency, Insecurity, and Identity amongst Somali Refugees in Dadaab Camps' (2005) 22(2) Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 6, 7.

[273] Nina Gren, *Occupied Lives: Maintaining Integrity in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in the West Bank* (OUP 2015) 18.

[274] Ivana Macek, *Sarajevo Under Siege: Anthropology in Wartime* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2019).

6.3.1 Waiting for the time

The prolonged liminality many refugees find themselves in is characterised by endless waiting and uncertainties. Most residents tell me they are waiting for 'the second interview'. This refers to the second step of the asylum application procedure in Greece, where the Asylum Service asks about everything it needs to know to be able to consider the application.[275] Based on this, the Greek authorities decide whether asylum seekers will receive refugee status or not. However, for Hassan (a Syrian man) and his family it has been seven months of waiting, for Habid (a Syrian man) nearly two years, for Ziryan (a Kurdish man) more than three years, with many others in the same prolonged situation of waiting. Even after the second interview, it can take a long time before the refugees hear back from the Asylum Service. Hence, although it is a perceived breakthrough in the endless waiting to have completed the second interview, in reality it does not provide certainty about the near or far future.

Receiving documentation has many implications for refugees, as it changes their legal status and thereby presents a way out of the social, spatial and legal liminality they have experienced for prolonged periods of time. During conversations, residents tell me more about this prospect. If they receive documentation, Sayed (an Afghani man) and his family are planning to leave as soon as possible: 'Once we receive the right papers, we will take a plane and go to Germany'. He explains that 'even if we would have to await our asylum there for two years or more, it is better than the situation we are in right now'. Many residents have Germany in mind as their final destination, but when they find out I am from the Netherlands they quickly adjust their earlier comments and say smilingly that 'we would be okay with that too'. Generally, they consider the Western countries of the EU as the ideal final destination.

Other residents emphasise that receiving documentation also brings concerns. Leila (a Syrian woman) explains that 'as soon as we get a permit, we are not allowed to go back into the camp'. She points out

[275] Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 'Η Συνέντευξη | Υπουργείο Μετανάστευσης Και Ασύλου' (*Η Συνέντευξη | The Interview*, 3 August 2020) <https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/diadikasia asyloy/i synenteyxi/> accessed 9 June 2021; UNHCR, 'What Happens After I Apply?' (*UNHCR Greece*, 2020) <https://help.unhcr.org/greece/applying for asylum/what happens after i apply/> accessed 9 June 2021.

that a change in legal status also means they no longer receive financial support, which means 'we are not able to rent a house in Thessaloniki even if we want to stay here'. Similarly, in an interview with RSA and Pro Asyl, Hassan (an Afghani man) explains that: 'Now that our interview passed, we are scared of receiving asylum and being kicked out of the camp like the others. There is always fear ruling our lives and not opportunities'.[276] In other words, even 'the way out' of the refugee camp creates uncertainties that are difficult to overcome. Here, NGO reports indicate the potential difficulties created by the policy system:

> Suleiman was evicted from Diavata camp in March 2019 following the Ministry of Migration Policy announcement on the gradual termination of accommodation to beneficiaries of international protection living in refugee camps in mainland Greece. Suleiman was given a copy of the Ministry's announcement and an informative letter about his eviction that he had to sign in order not to lose his right of receiving cash-assistance for another three months. Suleiman did not receive any information or advise on social welfare or housing. Since the end of March, he has been homeless.[277]

This shows that the end to liminality is a complex one. Perhaps, the only way out is to receive full citizenship either in Greece or another EU country, which encompasses a simultaneous passage in status, passage in place, passage of situations and passage of time.[278] However, the unfortunate reality is that not everyone will be deemed eligible, given the strict migration policies Greece and other EU countries have adopted.

6.3.2 Dreams about the future

Although residents tell me that the waiting seems endless and that they experience extreme hopelessness, some do have ideas about the future – especially the woman and girls. When I asked some girls in *Kasabassa* about their hopes and dreams, they gave really simple answers: Fatima (a Syrian girl) wants to finish her education, Seyda (a Kurdish girl) wants to start studying and Shirin (an Afghani girl) wants to become a

[276] RSA and Pro Asyl, 'Reception Crisis in Northern Greece: Three Years of Emergency Solutions' (RSA and Pro Asyl 2019) 22 <https://rsaegean.org/wp content/uploads/2019/05/Reception crisis in Northern Greece Three years of emergency solutions201905 final.pdf> accessed 12 March 2021.

[277] ibid.

[278] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1965).

football player. Other residents of the Diavata camp have similar ideas about the future. For example, Habid (a Syrian man) is 24 years old and wants to finish his studies to become a dentist. Ziryan (a Kurdish man) and Hassan (a Syrian man) want to work as an engineer again. They all tell me they cannot wait to go back to doing what they love and are good at, after their studies and careers have been interrupted for years. Especially the women and girls who go to *Kasabassa* are optimistic and excited about finding a place where they can continue to develop the (language, arts and/or sports) skills they are focussing on in the safe space, which shows that the safe space actively contributes to their sense of future.

Nevertheless, former Policy Officer B names 'expectations' as one of the major challenges during his work with refugees. For example, he explains that when the Balkan route closed in April 2016: 'the expectations continued to be going to Germany. People could not understand why this was not possible or happening. As a result, you have thousands of people where they do not want to be. It creates a feeling of limbo'. The residents of the Diavata camp experience uncertainty on a daily basis, but at the same time they are stuck in protracted refugee situations, which means the uncertainty is extended over prolonged periods of time. The construction of the three-metre high concrete wall is a good example of how, beyond their control, their living conditions and surroundings can radically change for the worse. Here, also the lack of communication contributes to misunderstanding and confusion about what is happening, leading some residents to think they might have to leave because the Diavata camp will be transformed into a military camp. Refugees are subjected to biopolitics and live in an occupied enclave under constant control of the authorities, but since this dependence only exists in hostile terms, it adds another layer of uncertainty and unsafety for the residents of the Diavata camp. This, in turn, shapes their experiences of temporality and ideas about the future.

In conclusion, residents of the Diavata camp relate themselves differently to 'the future'. While the refugees are waiting for 'the second interview' or documentation, there is no guarantee for less uncertainty or temporality in the processes that follow. However, despite the liminality that defines the Diavata camp and the experiences of its residents, many refugees have hopes and dreams for the future – especially the women and girls visiting *Kasabassa.*

7.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis examined how residents of the Diavata camp experience times of exacerbated exclusion. Based on this case study, the thesis conceptualised the experiences of refugees as processes of prolonged displacement, liminality and exception. First, the Diavata camp and the experiences of its residents can be defined by multi-layered exclusion. In particular, the remote location of the Diavata camp and the guarded fence surrounding it contribute to the isolation and marginalisation of refugees, creating temporal and spatial liminality in a politically controlled space. This, combined with the discriminatory Covid-19 restrictions imposed on refugee camps put in practice a material architecture of occupation. Second, moving to the residents' daily life in the Diavata camp, the thesis scrutinised what it means to live in liminality. Whereas the Diavata camp symbolises and materialises a feeling of **exception**, the Casa Base safe space for women and girls (by residents and volunteers consistently referred to as *Kasabassa*) embodies a feeling of **belonging**. Here, the co-existence of these contradictory spaces creates a continuous negotiation of a 'new normality' for its residents, while giving women and girls the agency to navigate their position between both sites. Third, this thesis showed that the new, three-metre high concrete wall that was built around the Diavata camp completes the biopolitical project of all-encompassing control on its subjects and finalises the making of the Diavata camp into a fully occupied enclave.

Altogether, the relevance this gives to the thesis, from a human rights perspective, is the documentation and creation of a counter-narrative to both the hegemonic societal discourse and policy practice of exclusion. This narrative highlights the biopolitics of 'care and control' as a dominant axis of refugee politics in Greece and the EU. Hence, both from an academic and human rights perspective, it is important to

take a critical stance towards practises of exclusion which increasingly predominate the European political landscape. Therefore, I want to stress the importance of continued research about refugees' experiences in the context of 'encampment', as the proliferation of refugee camps contributes to the normalisation of protracted refugee situations both in the EU and elsewhere. However, the themes raised in this research (i.e. regarding exclusion, liminality, exception, biopolitics and occupation) show that 'the refugee camp' is a site that challenges the very notion of human dignity.

Based on this, the recommendations for future research are twofold. First, building upon the interpretation and understanding of refugees' experiences in the Diavata camp, a comparative approach could examine how processes of multi-layered exclusion define other sites of prolonged displacement, including refugee camps in Greece (across the mainland and the islands) and other EU countries. Second, rather than solely focusing on the liminal phase, future research could examine the broader transition implied by a rite of passage, by analysing the 'end of liminality' among some of the refugees who adopt a new status by moving from being a 'refugee' to being a 'citizen' again. Overall, it remains important to contextualise refugees experiences within the realm of nation-state and EU politics and policy that largely define and design those experiences. Therefore, on a final note, this thesis urges state authorities to consider the counter-narrative presented by this and other research about the impact of refugee systems on peoples' lives and to adjust policies accordingly, by placing human rights rather than exclusion at its centre.

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APPENDIX: OVERVIEW INFORMANTS

Please note that throughout the thesis, the residents of the Diavata camp are only referred to with pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy and identity. The interviews from the fieldwork (with refugee camp residents as well as NGO informants) took place between 18 April and 10 June 2021.

Refugee camp residents

Interviews from the fieldwork:

- Abdul (an Afghani man)
- Ahmad (a Syrian man)
- Aisha (an Afghani woman)
- Darya (an Irani woman)
- Fatima (a Syrian girl)
- Habid (a Syrian young man)
- Hassan (a Syrian man)
- Jhara (an Irani girl)
- Leila (a Syrian woman)
- Mohammad (a Syrian man)
- Rewan (a Syrian girl)
- Rozhin (a Syrian girl)
- Sana (an Iraqi girl)
- Sayed (an Afghani man)
- Seyda (a Kurdish girl)
- Shirin (an Afghani girl)
- Yezda (a Kurdish woman)
- Zahra (an Afghani woman)
- Ziryan (a Kurdish man)

Interviews from NGO reports and news articles:

- Amin (an Irani man, 19 years old)[279]
- Behruz (an Afghani man, 22 years old)[280]
- Denise (an Afghani woman, 20 years old)[281]
- Diyar (an Iraqi man, 36 years old)[282]
- Hassan (an Afghani man, 58 years old)[283]
- Mehdi (an Irani man, 20 years old)[284]
- Suleiman (an Afghani man, 25 years old)[285]

NGO informants

- Maurice. He is the Casa Base coordinator at QRT.
- Ten international volunteers at Casa Base (anonymous), coming from Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. Additionally, the testimonials of Ana and Alessandra (former volunteers) from the QRT website are incorporated.[286]
- ARSIS coordinator (anonymous).

[279] RTI, 'The Impact of Covid 19 on Refugees in Greece' (RTI 2020) 2 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/577646af893fc0b5001fbf21/t/5ef0bb675598594c56fcad77/1592835023114/2020 06_RTI_COVID19_REFUGEESGR.pdf> accessed 4 May 2021.

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[283] RSA and Pro Asyl (n 280).

[284] RTI (n 279).

[285] RSA and Pro Asyl (n 280).

[286] QRT, 'Testimonials' (*Quick Response Team*, 2021) <http://quickresponseteam.gr/en/testimonials/> accessed 12 July 2021.

Governmental informants

- Nikolaos Connolly-Rangos. He is a former Policy Officer. He worked as the Regional Coordinator for Northern Greece for the Ministry of Migration Policy from September 2016 to July 2019. The interview was conducted online on 23 April 2021.
- B. (anonymous). He is a former Policy Officer. The interview was conducted online on 21 April 2021.
- Theoni Koufonikolakou. She is the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights in Greece. The informal conversation took place in-person on 3 June 2021.

Other informants

- Construction worker (anonymous). He was working for the Greek company 'Ellactor' to construct the new, three-metre high concrete wall around the Diavata camp. The informal conversation took place in-person on 20 May 2021.

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The present thesis - ***Refugees' Experiences in Sites of Prolonged Displacement, Liminality, and Exception: A Case Study of the Diavata Refugee Camp in Northern Greece*** written by **Annelie Boeren** and supervised by Georgios Agelopoulos, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki - was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA), coordinated by Global Campus Europe.

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