

**Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences
MA Social and Cultural Anthropology**

Master's Dissertation

**Biopolitics of Migration
and the
Sappers of Fortress Europe**

Panagiotis Ioannidis

SN: 5215M004

Contact: ioannidis_panos@yahoo.com

Examination Committee:

Professor Nota Kyriazi (Supervisor)
Associate Professor George Tsimouris
Assistant Professor Andreas Notaras

Copyright © Panagiotis Ioannidis, 2018

All rights reserved.

Any redistribution, storing or reproduction of part or all of the contents of this Master's dissertation in any form is prohibited. The reprinting, storing and distribution for non-commercial use of educational or scientific nature is allowed, under the precondition that the original work is properly cited, and the current message is displayed. Questions related to the use of the current work for commercial reasons should be directed to the author.

The approval of this Master's dissertation by Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences does constitute the endorsement of the views of the author.

*Dedicated to my nephews, Io and Aeneas,
with a wish that they grow up to become
conscious and appreciative of the fact that
they were born in a privileged society.*

Acknowledgments

This work would not have been the same if it wasn't for the inspiration provided by my fabulous colleagues in the Master's program. Their personal qualities and academic excellence have been crucial determinants of the overall experience of this two-year journey. Special thanks goes to Professor Nota Kyriazi for the impeccable cooperation throughout the whole process. Her guidance and support has been invaluable. Biggest gratitude goes to the participants of the study, the Asylum caseworkers who opened up and supported this research. Without their support this effort would not have been possible. Finally, I would like to thank the people close to my heart, both friends and family, who supported me throughout this research.

Contents

1. Introduction	7
1.1 Foreword	7
1.2 Phenomenon of interest	8
1.3 Scope of research	8
1.4 Outline	9
2. Literature review	10
2.1 The Biopolitical Administration of Borders.....	10
2.2 From resistance to replication	12
2.3 Working on the asylum claims.....	14
The caseworkers' identity	14
The regulatory framework and the asylum procedure	16
2.4 Bias of the decision makers and social construction.....	17
The human factor.....	17
Social construction in the procedure.....	18
3. Methodology	20
3.1 Research method and design	20
3.2 Participants and sampling considerations	20
3.3 Data collection and analysis.....	22
3.4 Ethical considerations	22
4. Findings.....	23
4.1 Critique on the migration policies	23
4.2 Grey zone: a space for subjectivity and personality	26
4.3 Taking sides	29
4.4 Enabling factors.....	30
4.5 Preventive factors.....	33
4.6 Beyond resistance.....	36
Alternative modes of struggle	36
A lost cause?	37
5. Discussion.....	40
5.1 General conclusions.....	40
5.2 Recommendations	42
5.3 Suggestions for further research	43
Bibliography	45

Abstract:

The asylum procedures are key to the implementation of European migration policies. Greece, even though it has revamped its asylum system during the last decade, is experiencing immense challenges to respond adequately to the increased migratory influx of the latest years. The shortcomings of the system are acknowledged by several of the asylum caseworkers, who are standing politically against the restrictive European migration policies as well as the political decisions producing dire humanitarian consequences for the migrants and asylum seekers. Through their work in dealing with the adjudication of asylum claims, they find novel ways of resisting these policies and demonstrate their solidarity towards the asylum seekers. Based on the Foucauldian notions of biopolitics and resistance, the objective of the study is to examine the ways in which the biopolitical power of the State is transformed to forms of micro-resistance by the asylum caseworkers. The research utilizes qualitative methodology, collecting primary data from a series of interviews with asylum caseworkers.

Keywords:

Biopolitics, migration, asylum, caseworkers, resistance, power, Greece

Table of Acronyms

AKA	Independent Asylum Office	NGO	Non-governmental Organization
COI	Country of Origin Information	PD	Presidential Decree
EASO	European Asylum Support Office	PGA	Peripheral Asylum Office
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights	QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
EU	European Union	RSD	Refugee Status Determination
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency	UK	United Kingdom
IRBC	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières		

1. Introduction

1.1 Foreword

The creation of the Schengen zone in the early 1990s put the shape and function of the European borders into a new perspective. It was soon followed by the development of an 'EU dimension' of asylum and migration policy (European Commission, 2018), which many scholars argue has been aimed at restricting the movement of incoming populations and reducing the numbers of migrants and asylum-seekers coming to Europe (Guild, 2016; Kaunert & Léonard, 2012). In this respect, the use of '*Fortress*' as a metaphor for characterizing Europe, is relating to the efforts of the border regime to "constantly and routinely reproduce Europe as an exclusive space" and has become commonplace within academic publications (Carr, 2016; Follis, 2012; Gebrewold, 2016; Roos, 2013).

The impressive capacity of the metaphor to produce solid analogies is equaled only to the level that it converses with the images of the European past. Fortresses are the most telling witnesses of the social and political life during the Middle Ages in Europe, as their height and volume was meant to protect the state by keeping away the dangers (albeit, not only external). Their abundance, even hundreds of years after their construction serves as a proof of their effectiveness in stopping or discouraging uncountable intruders, most of them being armies of foreigners with an eye to attacking and pillaging the land.

In our modern story of the besieged 'Fortress Europe' the invading army is a crowd of indigent, vulnerable migrants, running away from conflict, oppressive regimes, famine, disease, and a life of extreme poverty. Their objective is to pillage the European wealth and corrupt the purity of its culture. By virtue of the defenders' efforts, some of the invaders are *drowned* on the moat of the fortress (Dehghan, 2017), others are *captured* and put in the dungeons (Turnbull, 2016) while others are successfully *pushed back* while attempting to storm the walls (FRA, 2018). Where I want to focus in my study is in the work of the sappers¹; the asylum caseworkers, whose work symbolically creates miniscule cracks in the fortress's wall, through which a lucky few would manage to enter.

¹ One of the most efficient methods of siege warfare against the fortresses was the use of *sappers*, a specialized unit which would dig mines under their strong stone walls. The mines would create large voids, supported by wooden pillars, which later be ignited only to leave the ground on top of them unsupported, bringing down the walls in its collapse. Ideally the mine would start at a distance from the fortification, or be shielded from sight so that the defenders would not be able to realize what was happening, and the sappers would remain hidden and safe during the digging (Gravett, 2002, p. 45).

1.2 Phenomenon of interest

The European border policies do not allow for any legal and safe alternatives for people fleeing conflict and poverty (Jeandesboz & Pallister-Wilkins, 2016). During 2015, as a combined result of the protracted nature of the conflicts and insecurity in Asia and Africa, there was a sharp rise in the influx of migrants passing through Greece in their journey towards the affluent countries of northern Europe. The immediate effect of the increased flows was that they brought the problem to the forefront of public concern – as a less intense version of it was slipping under the radar for nearly twenty years (Cavounidis, 2002; Fakiolas, 2003; Fakiolas & King, 1996; MSF, 2014). The external pressures to the Greek government were successful in compelling it to mount up its efforts to modernize its Asylum system, a task that had started already since 2010 (Mol, 2015, p. 13). Part of this scale up was the recruitment and training of asylum caseworkers to address the increasing needs to process asylum claims².

My personal stimulus to start engaging with the subject in a scientific manner was a random event that took place in downtown Athens in the autumn of 2017. During a social gathering with some colleagues, one of the members of our company, employed at the time as an asylum caseworker started to discuss one of his cases, jokingly saying: “I really sympathized with this sweet Afghani guy! I think I will give him asylum!” Although the tone of his expression was evidently humorous, it sparked a very interesting discussion about the power asylum caseworkers have in their possession to decide on the ‘legal fate’ of asylum seekers entering the country. After a long hour of reflection on the various facets of the matter, I was convinced that there was more to the matter than meets the eye. Myself, having worked with migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees but never directly doing RSD work³ or working for the Asylum Service, I felt as if I was sitting at the right distance to research the subject in greater detail.

1.3 Scope of research

Despite the fact that nowadays there is considerable interest in the subject of migration as a field of research, its immense complexity causes having some of its aspects still understudied. Decision-making in the adjudication of asylum applications is often seen through a technical lens,

² Asylum Applications in Greece averaged 1874 persons from 2011 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of 7470 persons in November of 2016 and a record low of 390 persons in August of 2014 (Trading Economics, 2018).

³ RSD stands for ‘Refugee Status Determination’ and is the legal or administrative process by which the state or other entities determine whether a person seeking international protection is considered a refugee under international, regional or national law

and for the case of Greece in particular, the available literature on the asylum work is even more limited.

Therefore, the general objective of the study is to enhance our understanding about what happens around the walls of the *fortress* – the liminal stage of migrants entering Europe, going well beyond the physical dimension. More specifically, the aim of my research is to look into the transformations of power within a fairly narrow part of the broader migration theme that is the asylum process. I am particularly interested in identifying and delineating the terms upon which the biopolitical power of the state is transformed into forms of resistance in the hands of pro-migrant, left-wing asylum caseworkers. My secondary objective is to see how the act of resistance is able to affect the resisters themselves, through the perplex interconnections of the overarching power systems.

The scope of the research is limited by several pragmatic and scientific restraints. By focusing on a very specific group of informants, the research will be unable to draw general conclusions on the whole population of caseworkers or the asylum procedure as such. The research was restricted to the area of Athens, thus missing any other characteristics that could have been encountered in a sample of caseworkers working in all of the relevant offices in the country. Due to time restrictions, I was unable to approach the subject from additional angles that may have been of interest recognizing that it might have been beneficial to conduct additional interviews to allow the plethora of contrasting opinions to be heard.

The research as well was based on some fundamental assumptions. The main assumptions of the study were that left-wing caseworkers would have pro-migrant ideologies, would be opposing strict border controls, and that their political convictions would have an effect on their decisions, being relative more prone to grant asylum

1.4 Outline

My paper follows a standard five chapter format, starting from an introduction to the subject, followed by a literature review, methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations sections. In the second chapter, I would start by laying the theoretical foundations upon which my research is based. The priority in this initial stage would be to clearly define the basic theoretical notions of power and resistance within the framework of biopolitics and migration. In the third chapter I discuss the methodological considerations of my research, outline the reasons for which the current approach was employed, as well as the specificities relating to the collection and analysis of the primary data. Then, in the fourth chapter, I will present the findings of my research

– the direct input of my informants as it came to be through the interview process. In this particular part of the essay, I want to leave considerable space for the voices of the participants to be heard. Consequently, the connection between the findings and the theory will come at the next, fifth chapter, where I discuss again how the findings of the study relate back to the theory and to the initial considerations. Finally, I consider the implications of the study, provide recommendations and explore the possibilities for further research.

* * *

2. Literature review

2.1 The Biopolitical Administration of Borders

In order to be able to reach the point where the agency of the case-worker can be regarded as an exercise of either power or resistance, it is necessary to take an extra step back to consider the broader relevant theoretical context. The theoretical construct is in reference to migration of populations in relation to the modern sovereign State, and how this movement of people is regulated by facilitating or constricting the flows and consequently affecting the composition of the population of the State. In order to achieve this, I will draw from the works of Michel Foucault and Didier Fassin.

While it is argued that Foucault's use of the term 'biopolitics' has not been entirely consistent throughout his texts, often employing different meanings, there are two ways in which he employs the word that are of interest to my approach to the topic: a) as a rearticulation of sovereign power from the "right to death" (i.e. juridical power) to "power over life" and b) its connection to the rise of modern racism (Lemke, 2011, p. 34).

Based on the concept of "power over life" Foucault speaks of two distinct forms of exercise of sovereign power: one focusing on the discipline of the individual body, and the second one is focused on the species body, through interventions and regulatory controls (Foucault, 2006, p. 139). The latter, which Foucault refers to as 'the biopolitics of the population', tries to "control the series of random events that can occur in a living mass" and eventually try to "compensate for

their effects” (Foucault, 2003, p. 249). He further explains that the aims of this technology of power is to secure an overall equilibrium that would protect the population from internal dangers. Historically, the state started to organize and to centralize the regulation of the population from the 18th century, when it acquired knowledge (and gradually control) over the demographic data of its subjects.

In his later lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault shifts towards a notion of biopolitics which is closer to the threshold “between what must live and what must die” (Foucault, 2003, p. 254). He argues that racism is the tool that is being used in this respect, distinguishing amongst races, placing them in hierarchy, evaluating them as good or inferior, and eventually fragmenting the biological continuum addressed by biopower, urging for an imperative to “defend the society” against biological dangers.

Historically, states have not always been concerned with managing their inhabitants, as biopolitics and the consequent desire to know and affect populations on a large scale is associated with the development of statistics and demography as sciences, during the 17th century – predating Foucault’s ‘birth of biopolitics’ by a century. The accounts of states using migration measures to define the characteristics of their populations are numerous, since as early as the colonial times. Pagden (2003) and Tobin (2004) provide several examples spanning throughout time and space.

The work of Foucault, while not dealing directly with migration and borders, introduced vast theoretical, epistemological and methodological ‘revolutions’ (Davidson, 1997) which left a significant mark on migration research (Walters, 2015). The Foucauldian scholarship on migration is vast, and extends beyond the themes of biopolitics to governmentality and the political technologies of the state to regulate the lives of people on the move. Without making an attempt to describe the numerous ways in which Foucault has managed to affect our thinking about migration issues, I aim at utilizing his conceptual tools to make sense of the complex relationships, on an individual and institutional basis, at the borders of Europe.

Three decades later, Didier Fassin picks up the Foucauldian conceptual framework and applies it to examine the French immigration politics in the 1990s (Fassin, 2001). Fassin recognizes the fact that Foucault did not engage directly with the theme of immigration, but believes that the inference of the Foucauldian theme of biopolitics is relevant to the subject, especially while dealing with the ‘handling of the racialized body’. He highlights how the body becomes the site of inscription for the politics of migration, and race and ethnicity become effective determinants in modern state biopolitics. He recognizes as paragon to this the fact that, ultimately, having natural or physical differences are related to differences in life expectancy.

Interestingly, what Fassin saw in French racism was not a discrimination against foreigners, but against non-Europeans (2001, p. 7), especially after the creation of the Schengen space which represented an attempt to identify solutions at the European level. He looks into the fact that immigrants are often reduced to what Agamben (1998) would describe as 'bare life', that is existence reduced to its physical expression, as the everyday life of the migrants would be nothing more than "a social experience of suffering where the pathos expresses the harshness of circumstances and simultaneously serves as a resource to justify one's existence" (Fassin, 2001, p. 5).

On this basis the study regards the caseworkers as the agents of the biopolitical power of the state, in exercising control over its populations through the restrictions placed in cross-border movements, especially between the European Schengen space and the exterior world. They are the people enforcing the existent regulatory framework, alongside a complex system of other people and material resources, producing a "semipermeable membrane", to use a biological analogy, and define the eligibility of entrance. It is important to note that the semipermeable nature of the 'fortress Europe' is a deeply embedded characteristic of the common European space (Geddes, 2003; Tazzioli & Walters, 2016). The work of the caseworkers in reading "the letter of the law" is demarcating which life is deemed permissible to be hosted in the society and which should either be expelled and returned to its source, or cast into the shadows of illegality and constant persecution. The caseworker power is dully connected to their institutional position, vested by the state, the exercise of which is following specific steps, which I will discuss more detail in a later chapter on 'Asylum Procedure'.

2.2 From resistance to replication

If case workers are indeed the vectors of the biopolitical power of the states, how can we understand them being sources of resistance at the same time? Again, one needs to look into how the notion of resistance is developed in Foucault's writings. I would also draw from Judith Butler's reading on Foucault to interpret the behavior of case workers and finally Abu-Lughod (1990), to see how this act of resistance could have opposite effects in relation to what is expected.

Having a mind to understand resistance in Foucault's work needs to be based upon the notion of power itself. When he proposed a shift from juridical power (or the right to death) to normative power (power over life), he also provided a new understanding of power as a method of production rather than subtraction. Power was described as "the multiplicity of force relations

immanent in the sphere in which they operate [...] whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, on the various social hegemonies” (2006, pp. 93–94). In this way Foucault, drawing on the Nietzschean concept of the dynamism of force relations provides an image of power which in effect is “the stabilization and historical sedimentation of the effect of force on force” (Mills, 2003, p. 255).

While power looks univocal and overarching, the substrate is a complex of “micro-powers” where there are “innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and of an at least temporary inversion of power relations” (Foucault, 1995, p. 27). Power is thus everywhere and with everyone, and so ‘juridical type of resistance’ (as in “getting rid of power” or “fighting the power”) would be neither desirable nor feasible. This dictates a fundamental change in the way we understand resistance. Since power is everywhere, resistance can be seen equally everywhere. Foucault sees no system that leaves no room for freedom, and since power works through ‘micro-management’, resistance should come through ‘micro-subversion’ (Foucault & Rabinow, 2000, p. 298) and through the notion of ‘critique’, which “begins with questioning the demand for absolute obedience and subjecting every governmental obligation imposed on subjects to a rational and reflective evaluation” (De Boer, Sonderegger, De Boer, & Sonderegger, 2011, p. 23).

Butler (1990), expands on Foucault and builds on this idea by saying that the subject, is not determined by the power or the norms, but by a regulated process of repetition which produce substantializing effects – the repeated performance of the norms. She sees room for agency “to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition” (1990, p. 185). So, the idea would be that there will not be a fundamental rupture between the system and the subjects, which in our case would be the case workers –both as vectors of power and resistance, but a repetition of the expected norms with a slight skew.

Butler’s scheme of resistance, despite being often contested as incomplete, can be a useful analytical tool (Allen, 1998, p. 456). It does not theorize insurgency and revolution, focuses on small and local resistances, ‘micro-resistances’ without a mind to overthrowing systems or invert power relations. Complementing this concept of resistance and power, we bring the ideas of Abu-Lughod (1990, p. 42), who inverts ingeniously the schema, saying that “where there is resistance, there is power”, which she finds more useful for ethnographical analysis as it enables us to focus on particular situations and examine power in this respect.

My research aims to examine a selected set of asylum caseworkers, who operate as vectors of resistance to the biopolitical power of the State, and to migration policies with which they heavily disagree. This resistance would utilize the same tools provided by the system to

exercise their vested powers (biopolitical control of incoming migrant flows) but with a mind to 'skew' the results of this exercise towards a result more compliant to their own beliefs and understanding of how national and European policies should be.

In the final part of this study, I wish to examine the possible analogy between Abu-Lughod's research on the Bedouin women with the asylum case workers. She saw that these women took advantage of contradictions in their society to assert themselves and to resist, using forms produced by (and not independent of) power relations. She shows how resistance in complex systems produces important dynamics, and how multiple systems of power eventually catch up with the resisting actors on other levels (Abu Lughod, 1990, p. 53). In a way what Abu-Lughod does is circling back to what Foucault stated, the impossibility to escape power, as the resisters are products of the same power relations, their behaviors, thoughts and intuitions are likewise (Pickett, 1996, p. 465). In the same line, I wish to also examine the idea of seeing how this partial resistance could in the end be complementing the same power it wishes to resist.

2.3 Working on the asylum claims

The caseworkers' identity

Asylum caseworkers in Greece are far from being a homogenous group. Being part of the Asylum Service (hereinafter 'the Service'), their composition is connected to the Service's history. So, when the Service was created by the law 3907/2011 (later amended by the law 4375/2016), and started operating in 2013 it came under the Ministry of Interior at first, and then under the newly created Ministry of Migration Policy (Asylum Service, 2018b). In order to cover its operational needs, including processing asylum claims, it was partially staffed by a) transferring civil servants from other public services, b) putting in place successful candidates of previous hiring procedures irrelevant to migration or asylum (Tsitsas, 2013), or c) by specific and targeted recruitment process for the Service as such. Irrespective of which of the aforementioned pathways one followed to become Service staff, one could work as a caseworker, but also work on the "admissibility – non-admissibility"⁴ (based on EU-Turkey Statement⁵) or do administrative work.

⁴ For more information regarding the inadmissibility of an application please consult the following: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/procedures/admissibility-procedures>

⁵ Statement of Heads of State or Government of 18 March 2016 on actions to address the refugee and migration crisis, including the return of all persons irregularly entering Greece after 20 March 2016 to Turkey.

Of particular interest to us is the people recruited through the targeted procedures (pathway 'c', see above), since they comprise the bulk of the participants to the study. Common to all of them is the fact that they, in contrast to all the rest, have a stated interest to work with migrants, as they have deliberately applied for these particular positions. They would be employed with contracts of determined period, normally for one year, extendable according to the needs of the Service. The fixed-term contract caseworkers comprise approximately half of the Service's population, as in December 2017 they would be 251, comparing to the 264 regular contract employees.

The vacancies notice of the fixed-term contract posts also described in much detail what the prerequisites for becoming a caseworker are. So, based on the latest such notice (ΣΟΧ 2/2017), there was an amazingly broad range of academic backgrounds suitable for the candidates: from a law or international politics degree to education, history or even psychology. Candidates were also required to have a good knowledge of English language and computer skills. In a controversial move, the Greek government in trying to battle long-term unemployment, has recently decided to promote unemployed over more highly qualified candidates for the caseworker positions.

The caseworkers are assigned a post with a specific Asylum office, one of the approximately two dozen different Regional Asylum Offices around Greece. Specifically, there are 12 Peripheral Asylum Offices (PGA) and 10 Independent Asylum Units (AKA), both of which are coordinated and managed by the Central Asylum Service (Asylum Service, 2018a). The caseworkers posting depends on their initial choice at the time of application for the job. They are provided with a desk, computer equipment with internet access and they are obliged to work at the office, except for some days where, conditionally, they can work on cases (decision write-up) from home – a concept known as teleworking.

To be better able to perform their duties, the Service provides training to every newly-recruited caseworker, in collaboration with UNHCR and EASO, on refugee status determination basics, interview techniques, evidence assessment, decision write-up, and other subjects. The training is delivered by legal experts, external collaborators, as well as designated trainers from within the Service. This 'basic training' differed in terms of content and duration, according to the period of recruitment and the available resources⁶. During 2017, there were also specific trainings organized by the Service to enhance the quality of work on the critical issues of vulnerabilities and human trafficking.

⁶ This information was provided by the participants.

The regulatory framework and the asylum procedure

The legal framework relating to the asylum procedure in Greece is somehow complicated, comprised of 5 different laws, 9 Presidential decrees, 40 ministerial decisions, 2 ministerial circulars, 2 European directives, and 5 international legal texts. Not surprisingly, around this complexity a dense ecosystem of individuals and organizations has evolved, providing legal aid to the migrants wishing to apply for international protection, especially aiming to ensure proper information and registration of their claim, vulnerability assessment, support during the interview, appealing negative decisions, providing support with civil registry acts, etc.

If a certain person wishes to be granted refugee status, an inarguably privileged condition in relation to life as 'undocumented' or 'irregular', then he has to provide a plausible account of persecution (Goodwin-Gill & McAdam, 2007; Ludwig, 2013). His claim is processed through the provisions of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as the person needs to fit the criteria of the legal definition of a refugee. The caseworkers are responsible, taking up the role of asylum adjudicators, to apply the relevant legal framework to the process known as 'refugee status determination' (RSD).

That being said, considering the two fundamental legal documents, PD141/2013 and L4375/16, the first instance process can be split in two major stages. The first part has to do with retrieving all necessary information from the applicant, through the registration and the interview process. The second part is comprised of the analysis of the data by the caseworker and the decision write-up and publication. It should be noted that each applicant is assigned a specific caseworker who is empowered to conduct the interview and also take the final decision.

During the interview, the caseworker needs to assess some critical aspects of the claimant's case (for a very detailed analysis on each aspect see IRBC, 2008). One such aspect is the presence of a well-founded fear of persecution. The asylum seeker should have a subjective fear of persecution and also that the fear must be well-founded in an objective sense, that is, it is justified in light of the objective situation. The caseworker needs to check against the facts, using databases (called "Country of Origin Information", or COIs⁷), to see if the objective aspect stands. Then, the caseworker needs to see if the claimant is indeed systematically persecuted, that is establishing if the level of harm surpasses the threshold of what could be acceptable as 'persecution' per se, in the strict legal sense. Even if this is the case, there are only specific

⁷ Country of Origin Information (COI) refers to information on countries from which asylum seekers originate relevant for decision-makers in the field of asylum (for more information please visit <https://www.easo.europa.eu/country-origin-information>)

grounds of persecution covered by the Geneva Convention, which are based on race, nationality, religion, political opinions, and belonging in a particular social group. Then, the caseworker needs to check if the claimant is unable, or by reason of his or her fear of persecution, unwilling to avail him or herself of the protection of the country of nationality. Depending on the characteristics of persecution (i.e. the agent, intensity), there must be an assessment of the willingness and the adequacy of protection that can be offered by the State. Finally, there should also be an assessment of the alternative of internal flight that is the relocation of the claimant in a given internal area within the country of origin is available, and whether the claimant could reasonably be expected to relocate and live there safely, now and for the foreseeable future (Marx, 2002).

In case the decision to grant refugee status is negative, the applicant may appeal for his case to be examined before the Appeals Committee or at a later stage apply for annulment before the Administrative Appeals Court. The appeal will be examined by an Independent Appeals Committee at second instance and is comprised of legal experts and presided by a judge, examining the case based on the evidence in the file and does not conduct a new hearing of the applicant⁸. So, in that sense, the caseworkers' involvement with the procedure begins and ends at the first instance, and can only affect indirectly the other instances.

2.4 Bias of the decision makers and social construction

The human factor

The examination process of asylum claims is undertaken by case workers who usually “have little corroborating evidence, and must make an assessment of credibility, largely a subjective response, involving a reliance on assumptions about human behavior, judgments, attitudes, and how a truthful account is presented” (Herlihy, Gleeson, & Turner, 2010). As with all areas of law, adjudicators of asylum claims are expected to adjust their willingness to accept varying degrees of doubt, depending on the risks of a wrongful decision. In most refugee cases, given the inherent limitations of preliminary data collection, the scarcity of the evidence often provided, the limitations in verification, and the fact that the stakes of harming a person via an incorrect judgment are high, there is a need for a ‘particularly low standard of proof’ (Kagan, 2015). In the several points discussed above, the caseworker will eventually put ‘a part of himself’ in the procedure.

⁸ The Appeals Committee might request to hear the applicant again if important information on the case are missing.

The issue of subjectivity involvement is well-known with the asylum experts, and organizations such as UNHCR are actively trying to find ways in which its effect can be minimized. Since 2013, in a joint effort with the European Commission, they published new guidance which aims at systematically reducing the 'human effect' in credibility assessment (Gyulai, 2013). In this manual, the experts recognize, amongst other points, the main factors influencing the caseworker in distorting or interpreting the incoming information from the asylum-seeker. The factors can be categorized grossly as contextual, professional and individual. The decision could be affected by absolutely unrelated matters, such as hunger (Danziger, Levav, & Avnaim-Pesso, 2011). Previous professional experience (i.e. the judge having worked for an NGO or in defense capacity of asylum seekers) as well as the political views of the adjudicator are both considered major determinants of positive bias (Ramji-Nogales, Schoenholtz, & Schrag, 2007, p. 399). Moreover, factors such as burnout due to workload or vicarious traumatization also play into the decision-making.

It is often cited (Millbank, 2009; UNHCR, 2013) that the appropriate counter-measure to combat subjectivity while processing the asylum claim is self-awareness. In order to be able to assess the credibility of the claimant, it is imperative that the person conducting the interview (and eventually taking the decision) engages in self-assessment, and in this way he recognizes "the extent to which their own emotional and physical state, values, views, assumptions, prejudices, and life experiences influence their decision-making". The total eliminations of these influential factors is accepted as unrealistic, but to this end UNHCR emphasizes the concept of learning as playing a major role in this respect. Training of staff is connected to self-awareness and is thus important to keep personal factors as far from the decision-making process as possible (Gyulai, 2013, p. 139).

Social construction in the procedure

In a very interesting and pertinent to my research publication Julia Dahlvik (2017), argues that the social practices of the caseworkers are vital in constructing 'the facts, the artefacts, and the (in)credibility' of each asylum case, and how their decisions are able to have a detrimental effect on the regime. She explains how the use of COI databases, which could be regarded as 'objective sources of evidence' could be utilized in a biased manner (2017, p. 374; Gibb & Good, 2013), or how the adjudicator has the capacity to 'select' the authoritative documents he wishes to be included in the file, or decide on the overall credibility of a claimant. While the reasons for doing so and probably favoring or disfavoring a claimant remain outside the scope of her research, it is very helpful to see how the agency of the caseworker comes into play in such a decisive manner.

A very vivid example of how the approach of seeing asylum decision-making as social construction could be 'put to work', is the case of the old asylum system in Greece, dating back to the period before the Asylum Service. Back in the day, the refugee system was police-centered, with policemen acting as caseworkers. There are several scholarly publications describing the inefficiencies and shortcomings of that period (Black, 1994; Rozakou, 2012; Sitaropoulos, 2000; Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004), highlighting how the chronic shortages of human resources and the lack of appropriately trained personnel actually reflected on the near-inexistent protection of asylum seekers in Greece. The correlation between the Greek Police and extreme right-wing politics is also well established (Phillips, 2012; Tsimitakis, 2015). The combination of these elements created a highly biased system that resulted in refugee recognition rates in the country being next to zero: 0.3 and 0.06 per cent for 2002 and 2003 respectively, in comparison to a EU average of 10-15 per cent (Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004, p. 27).

In the years after the creation of the Asylum Service, the presence of asylum caseworkers with pro-migrant ideologies has the potential to create the exact reverse effect. The caseworkers, some of them being particularly fond of their pro-migrant ideologies would, potentially, have their work output affected by the specific way in which they exercise their power. This power, being a product of human interaction and its exercise containing the presumption that caseworkers "may put into effect a degree of freedom, means that any [such] interaction holds potential for resistance" (Powell, 2012, p. 72). Moreover, at the same place where resistance is identified, we can identify the potential grounds for creativity in exploiting possibilities, the production of micro-politics, and the emergence of small-scale practical alternatives (Powell, 2012).

Another important aspect in the social construction of the asylum procedure stems from the dynamic relations within the networks of power. That is, it is important to explore the relations between the caseworkers and their colleagues, alliances and enmities within their working environment. These relationships, according to Foucault (1978, p. 92) are not being imposed in a top-down manner, but form chain systems or isolation schemes. They are thus not evident by simply looking into the organizational chart of the Asylum Service, but only by looking into the real interactions between the actors within the system. These 'power relationships' are important to become connected with the actors of the process, since as Wartenberg (1990, p. 170) notes, "the actions of the agent count on the future actions of the aligned agents being similar to their past actions". Consequently, social groupings of the caseworkers, either official or unofficial, or any other forms of platforms of exchange on issues relating to the cases become pertinent in our research.

* * *

3. Methodology

3.1 Research method and design

My research wishes to examine the relation between power and resistance as a dyadic and dynamic overarching scheme in the asylum casework: Do the caseworkers transform the biopolitical power of the State to forms of resistance against the migration policies they oppose politically? Since the objective of this paper was to investigate comprehensively a specific array of social practices, a quantitative methodology would not be suitable. The fact that this field is under-investigated, the holistic approach of the qualitative methodology will have the potential to be much more fruitful. Instead of quantitative questionnaires, interviews could provide much more detail and opportunities to glean insights during examination. Therefore, I decided to approach the topic using qualitative methods, though the utilization of semi-structured interviews with primary informants being the asylum caseworkers themselves. Secondary data was collected in the form of official documents from the Asylum Service, relevant legislature, as well as data made available through academic publications on the subject.

My research uses a post-positivist epistemology (Trochim, 2000, p. 20) with critical realist ontology. Post-positivism navigates a path between epistemological absolutism and relativism by conceptualizing knowledge as best available theory subject to further empirical investigation that may falsify our original presumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Specifically in relation to my research, utilizing a post-positivist approach is consistent with the deductive approach to the theory (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 5). Critical realism facilitates understanding of the decision-making environment that surrounds the caseworkers by providing insight into the interrelationship between its structures and potentials, and individual action (Kontos & Poland, 2009).

3.2 Participants and sampling considerations

Eligibility criteria for participation in the sample were defined as such: Any person who a) has considerable experience in asylum casework, having worked for more than 12 months on case handling in the Greek Asylum Service at the first instance (consequently excluding asylum professionals who worked solely on second instance or as legal experts providing support to the applicants), b) who is still actively working for the Asylum Service or has stopped less than six months at the time of the interview, and c) who is self-defined as left-wing (liberal, communist, anarchist, or anti-authoritarian). Both criteria on experience and political ideology are important,

so that participants would have meaningful contribution to the data. Self-definition of political stance is an effective mean to approach political bias, as it plays a very important role in political perception (Conover & Feldman, 1981; Duckitt & Sibley, 2016).

I utilized initially a purposive sampling procedure followed by an exponential non-discriminative chain-referral⁹ (“snowball”) sampling methodology in order to find my informants (Etikan, Alkassim, & Abubakar, 2016). The reason for choosing such approach is that the population required could not be acquired through probability sampling, (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Initial cases were peers from my extended network, who then connected me to other caseworkers who fitted the criteria of the sample, who in turn, connected me with other potential informants. With the intention to avoid community bias or anchoring, I had two separate entry points in the pool of possible participants. Six people (participants of both genders) were identified and were asked to participate in the research, providing data through their interviews, all of whom were eager to contribute. All of the participants were on fixed-term contracts with the Asylum Service, with a mean experience of 34 months in the post. All of them have worked in more than one office/unit of the Asylum Service.

Given the fact that the aim of this research is to look into a fairly narrow phenomenon, without comparative dimension, and among a group of relatively homogeneous individuals, the number of participants needed with regards to the sample size, was low. There is scholarly evidence that the development of meaningful themes and useful interpretations can be achieved with such a low sample (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). While I would refrain from stating that the data reached a problematic term such as ‘theoretical saturation’ (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016; O’reilly & Parker, 2013), the number of interviews was determined by a) the sufficiency of depth of information to fully describe the study phenomenon (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002), b) the availability of participants, and c) the inherent restrictions (timeframe and resources) that stem out of the nature of this paper being a Master’s dissertation. In either case, the sample was not kept purposefully low, as copious efforts were done to find as many participants as possible for the interviews, so the interviews halted when no other participant could be found. The results of this research are by no means generalizable to the general population of the caseworkers in the Asylum Service, and so I do not aim at producing statistical inferences to the general population of caseworkers.

⁹ In this sampling methodology, each participant could nominate one or more prospective participants who share the same traits.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The eight interviews, averaging 77 minutes in length, were transcribed by the author to be later imported for analysis into QDA software. The content remained in Greek and only the passages used as direct quotations in the study were translated in English. First level open coding was done upon initial processing of the transcripts, with the scope to identify the key concepts expressed by the interviewees and capture the initial impressions of the data. Focused coding was done at a second stage, after the elimination of certain codes that were deemed irrelevant to the study (Charmaz, 2006). At this stage, several new codes were added acting as ‘containers’ to other, narrower themes.

The first and second level codes were combined in a network view and connected inferentially and conceptually, in order to identify any further concealed information in the narrative (Herz, Peters, & Truschkat, 2014). The center of focus was around the decision-making procedure as such, with two main axes identified being the internal and external factors affecting the final decision.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Due to the sensitive nature of the subject, essential ethical considerations were discussed in advance with the supervising professor, with the aim to take all necessary steps to safeguard both the participants and any other people involved indirectly in this research (i.e. asylum applicants) and minimize the risks related to their contribution to the study (ASA, 1999; Bryman, 2015, pp. 130–150).

In view of that, all participants were fully aware of the nature and aims of the study before their participation. An informed consent form was given to all the participants before the interview providing in written all necessary details, a copy of which was signed after having any possible questions answered by the researcher. All the participants gave explicit permission to be audio recorded and were explained in detail the processing stages of the data collected. They were also made aware that they were in control of the recording procedure, should they wish to have any part of it omitted or considered off the record. None of the participants raised any concern during the conduct of the interviews.

Additionally, to secure the anonymity of the participants, all the interviews were conducted in a secluded environment, with sufficient distance to their work premises. Before the interviews took place, participants were informed as to their expectations regarding anonymity and credit.

During the analysis, the names and personal information of the participants were kept confidential by omitting names and assigning a special code to each interview, but also changing the gender of the participant randomly. All biographical information that was recorded during the interviews and which could lead in the identification of a participant included was processed and left out. The data relating to particular cases was also processed with a mind to protect all persons involved. The data included in the study was filtered in a way that no information published could lead to the identification of either the caseworker or the asylum-seekers. For this reason, the names of the countries, towns, and the names and sexes of the claimants have been randomly assigned.

* * *

4. Findings

4.1 Critique of migration policies

As we previously discussed, the perspective from which this study looks at the issue of caseworkers' power and resistance is far from being an objective outlook on the whole community of caseworkers. The informants openly discussed their anarchist, anti-authoritarian, or communist ideologies. The research design is heavily based on the left-wing political ideology of the sample, which in turn affects heavily the caseworker's interaction with the main elements of the environment: the claimants, their legal claim, the decision-making process, as well as the Asylum Service. For this reason, discussion on the findings shall start off from this point.

If someone considered the caseworkers of the Asylum Service as representatives of the Greek state for a specific function, he would be surprised to see that every single informant expressed rather renegade opinion about migration and EU policies relating to the movement of people inside the Old Continent. One of the participants was particularly bold in describing his aversion to the modern state of affairs:

“In relation to human migration, my dear friend, the states and the borders are invention of the last two centuries. This thing aside, people will always go and always come. The rest is just politics. [...] There should be no borders, there should be free movement, people should not be subjected to these degrading treatment and everyone should have papers.”

Most of them were very direct in pointing out how Europe failed to stand up to its declared principles, both in terms of humanitarian and human rights standards, as well as in terms of political unity and solidarity between the states. Racism, xenophobia, populism, and exploitation were amongst the recurrent themes of our discussions.

The caseworkers are by no means oblivious or ignorant to the broader migration matters, extending well beyond the borders of Greece. The efforts of Europe to curb migration by externalizing the issue, through bilateral agreements between EU States and African countries, like the Khartoum Process, (Quie & Hakimi, 2018) or other kinds of deals, like the one with Libya, (AFP, 2017), did not go unnoticed by them. They saw those efforts with skepticism and judged them as an unfair attempt to 'sweep under the rag' a problem which the Western world helped create, through military or capitalist interventions.

Moreover, their critique on contemporary migration policies was related to the idea of European states running inefficient asylum systems purposefully, as a means of deterrence for prospective migrants. They described how, either by means of sustaining additional ordeals and even detention in many cases, the system "wants to be perceived as unwelcoming and unattractive". This way, the migrants in Turkey, Libya, or elsewhere will think twice before they get on the boat to enter Europe.

More specifically to the case of Greece, the respondents made several condemnatory statements about the way the crisis has been handled since its climax in 2015. The Ministry of Migration Policy was particularly targeted, as spearheading the 'inhumanity' of the response from the Hellenic authorities, failing time after time to properly organize the asylum-related setup, which added to the chaotic situation of the first two years. The Minister himself, being perceived as hostile to all humanitarian NGOs, left little space for synergies aiming at ameliorating the state of affairs and addressing the needs.

Discussions about the common statement between the EU and Turkey received the most fervent criticism. For the informants, the statement was a political document trying to override international law at the expense of human rights standards. In their eyes, Turkey is far from being a 'safe third country', often referred by them as an 'authoritarian state', which cannot guarantee the fundamental human rights to the migrants, let alone those of political significance to the Turkish state, such as Iraqi and Syrian Kurds. Most of the participants had actively refused to participate in the "admissibility/non-admissibility screening" as per EU-Turkey statement, believing that this was deplorable and illegal:

"The legal framework itself is challenged by the content of the 'deal' [...] Before the Greek administration decides if someone is indeed a refugee or not, they need to

decide whether he can be sent back to Turkey. This is based on a political agreement and not a legal text, so it is not just unfair but also it is illegal.”

For most of the participants, the Greek authorities were the ones to blame for the situation that was created in the islands following the EU-Turkey statement. For the participants, the ‘geographic restriction’ was an invention of the Ministry of Migration Policy, the Hellenic Police and the Asylum Service, in order to contain the flows to mainland Greece. This formed the basis of what they, and lots of others, perceive to be the transformation of the islands of Eastern Aegean to open prisons (Smith, 2017; Witte, 2018), where squalor, neediness, and several degrees of restrictions of freedom send out a clear message of what awaits migrants and asylum seekers in Greece.

Finally, the informants also shared some very caustic remarks about the Asylum Service as such, its’ functioning and its’ role in the European migration crisis, which at the first level of critique was relating to the establishment and the early evolution stages of the Service. The unsuitability of the buildings, the lack of computers and voice recorders, the lack of a forward-looking managerial and strategic vision, the hasty and often unprepared and improvised solutions to the emerging problems were cited amongst others.

According to the participants, the state of the Asylum Service even today is substandard in comparison to the alleged quality of European counterparts. The caseworkers identified several gaps, such as the inadequacy of infrastructure and personnel (with allegedly thousands of people queuing every day in front of the Service’s entrance, both in Attica Office and in the islands), enormous delays in case handling (sometimes extending for periods exceeding two years), the horrid work conditions (with offices infested with rodents), and the lack of adequate quality in terms of technical know-how (i.e. specialized techniques for interviewing children, rape survivors, etc.).

The fact that there was a decision that the latest recruitment would prioritize long-term unemployed candidates in favor of experienced candidates was also commented harshly. Such a practice is not uncommon in Greece, especially under the populist left-wing SYRIZA administration, as the central government imposes its policies over the various different recruitment decisions at the public sector with the aim to lower the long-term unemployment. Lots of experienced caseworkers, including people who contributed in this study, are fearing that their contracts will not be renewed to make space for the new recruits. A decision like this produces many challenges to the Asylum Service, as it will further amplify the bottlenecks, by creating training needs for the personnel that will need to be brought up to speed.

This particular vantage point of the left-wing caseworkers is:

“I would say that the way I perform my duties is 90% politically charged. The reason I went into this is my political background, and I have been in the left since I was born. Damn, even my pediatrician and my ophthalmologist were left-wing! I tried to see my job more objectively, but I can’t.”

Hence, it is evident that our caseworkers are heavily affected by their personal beliefs in a system with fewer border controls, with people deserving ‘a second chance’ even for social reasons and not only persecution, instilled with a spirit of solidarity towards the migrants, and with a profound negativity towards the idea of a ‘fortress Europe’. This is the springboard from which they begin their journey into the legal labyrinth, and their chaperone into the grey zone of decision making.

4.2 Grey zone: a space for subjectivity and personality

As we have already discussed in the second chapter, the human subjectivity and personality play a lot into the asylum process, both during interview and decision-making, as a central and inescapable constituent of the process as such. This ontological category was evident throughout the dialogue with the informants, as the concept of ‘freedom’ in the way they perform their duties was key in how they understand their work.

While there are ways for subjectivity to remain concealed within the process, one of the most important is the caseworker’s conduct during the interview as such. While both EASO (EASO, 2014, p. 13) and UNHCR (UNHCR, 2015) stress the need for the interviewer to retain a neutral stance towards the process, this is not always the case. As the caseworker is leading the discussion, he has the capacity to guide the applicant toward specific paths, as one of the participants points out:

“During the interview, there is a gray zone in how we will direct the interview towards what you expect to hear or if we want to hear something specific and we ‘take it’ there, although we shouldn’t.”

Leading the discussion was not always perceived by the participants as being ‘problematic’, as in many ways this enabled the asylum claimant to get the story to somewhere it might not have eventually reached, potentially fulfilling the needs of the convention. They believed that they were not ‘constructing’ the truth, but were helping the truth to be revealed. For example, there was one case where the claimant was coming from a conflict zone that would have made an easy case for asylum. Instead, the way the applicant was expressing his story was making it seem as if he had migrated for economic reasons. The caseworker diverted his narrative, back to

a 'constructive' trail, by asking questions about his ethnic origin, how his people have been treated, and the hardships they had to endure.

There were several ways in which the participants felt that they could make a difference in the way they behaved during the interviews, not all of them would be considered problematic. There were many caseworkers who believed that they try their best to make the interviewees feel comfortable and open up during the process. While this seems as an obvious thing to expect (and it is indeed a directive of their training), it doesn't seem to be the case with all caseworkers out there: several participants claim that most others' behaviors range from being either indifferent to being hostile. If we consider the short-term nature of the direct interaction between the applicant and the caseworker (just a few hours), it is easy to understand that rapport-building could have an immense impact on the interview outcome.

Another really important part of the process, heavily affected by the caseworkers' subjective stance, is their reaction towards contradictions. It is quite often that the story of a claimant has contradicting elements, either towards other parts of his own story or external sources of information (i.e. COIs). There is a great deal of flexibility in judging whether this contradiction stems out of 'normal' and 'understandable' reasons. Such a case could be memory complications relating to stress during the events or during the interview, . Likewise, the caseworker needs to judge the overall credibility of the applicant based on other issues like delay to flee his country, not applying directly for asylum, or failing to apply for asylum in other countries. In these points, again, there seems to be variance on how tolerant and eager the caseworker is, and definitely the participants of the study seemed to be more than eager to understand, justify and support behaviors that could easily be seen as damaging to the credibility of the applicant in the eyes of other adjudicators. As one of the participants of the study explained:

“Out of all the thing the interviewee might say, some might be in line with what you find in the sources and some others might not. This is where you should ask yourself, if the ones not in line with the COIs are really so important that they counterbalance the rest. Should I consider them or should I turn a blind eye?”

There are then some parts on the claimant's profile that are up to subjective interpretation by the caseworker. This is relating to the definition of the refugee, by the Convention, which states that a claimant's fear of persecution must be "by reason of" one of the five enumerated grounds - that is race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group and political views. So, for example, while persecution because of race or religion might be somewhat straightforward, membership in a particular social group is much more debatable as an attribute.

Yet another point in which a grey zone seems to form is when the caseworker needs to assess the 'Internal flight/relocation alternative', which is the possibility that the claimant moves to another, less hostile part of the country before seeking refugee status abroad. For this to be a viable option, the caseworker decides if such an option would have substantial risk for the applicant. This was very vividly explained throughout one of the interviews:

"The convention and the legal instruments say that you need a 'reasonable possibility' that this person would be persecuted and harmed. Someone could just say it's 'just a possibility' – but I will fight to make it 'reasonable'. Practically, you do it based on the interpretation you do and the way you combine the various elements of the claimants profile"

A final element that puts to question the degree of subjective involvement of the caseworker is the exclusion of the migrant from being granted asylum on the basis of having committed a crime under common law. Specifically, the Convention would exclude any persons who have committed any serious non-political crime outside the country of refuge prior to his admission to that country as a refugee. Again here, in the discussion with the participants it became very evident that the criteria of 'seriousness' are vague enough to leave room for the caseworkers to decide freely.

Of course, the grey zone does not come without limits for the participants. On the contrary, even if they would consider themselves very eager to help, they felt that this help comes under the precondition that the applicant would also at least do his part in this:

"I believe that the claimant should 'give me something' – I can't do the paddling all by myself! I would then have to go through each and every inconsistency and incredibility in your story and start finding excuses like 'here you were stressed', 'there you were confused' – this would totally deconstruct the interview. It's ok to do it here and there, but not throughout the decision."

Lastly, one of the participants describes the border of the zone:

"I have rejected people who were talking crap at the interview, that when you try to crosscheck the information it doesn't even make sense. I believe that we are in a 'help-me-to-help-you' basis, and I can't help 100% of the cases."

4.3 Taking sides

Within the framework established by the presence of the aforementioned grey zone, the participants of my study were very succinct that are always leaning towards one side of the zone: the one in favor of the migrant. In most of the cases, this is not easily evident, as a big portion of the work that they do is related to manifestly unfounded or abusive applications¹⁰ (UNHCR, 1983) or manifestly founded ones – but there is a portion of the cases they process, which could sway either positively or negatively, depending on the caseworker in charge. For one of the participants, this feeling of freedom was a particularly important element of his work:

“Within my work in the Asylum Service, if I felt that I am not free to take decisions the way I see things, I would just quit. [...] From one hand, I am feeling that I am just part of the system, but from the other hand I would enter an interview, look at the guy, and think: ‘How lucky you are to have been assigned to me?’ – because his whole story was all nonsense, but he got asylum just because I knew how to, in relation to his country of origin.”

It was very evident from the discussions with the informants that they had a very clear sense of legality in what they were doing, even while recognizing that they were biased in favor of the migrants. Several of them acted with a sense of ‘natural law’, with themselves being vectors towards the recognition of a right that has been there all along – in line with the UNHCR’s principles that the person does not become a refugee because of recognition, but is recognized because he was already a refugee (1992, p. 7). An example along the typical lines follows:

“I do not consider myself as an activist. I am using a perfectly legal way to help people. I am not doing anything out of the ordinary, neither am I helping anyone get in through the back door. I am helping people who would have either drowned or sent back to Turkey. Since I always stay within what’s legally acceptable I don’t consider my work to be anything more than that.”

While as we suggested the grey zone has its limits, there are specific factors that are able to push the boundaries from either side. These factors are either enabling or preventive, in the sense that they provide or restrict the space of the grey zone and the capacity of the caseworker to influence the decision in the favor of the migrant.

¹⁰ The cases of clearly unfounded, fraudulent or abusive applications is when the applicant deliberately attempts to deceive the authorities determining refugee status, or utilizes his right to apply for asylum in order to delay his deportation procedure.

4.4 Enabling factors

The first and most decisive factor that came from the discussions was the power of the caseworker per se. This power was viewed by the informants as 'absolute', in the sense that the whole process of the asylum claim was under their direct control, and they would have no-one to validate or approve their decisions. They are neither obliged to consult with anyone during the process, however complex the case might be. As we will also discuss later on, there were very few cases in which this power has been directly challenged, but these were isolated exceptions. Still in these exceptions, this 'absolute' power is demonstrated by the fact that it is more convenient for the system to change the caseworker assigned to a case, than have that caseworker change his mind about the case.

One of the most important factors linked to the power of the caseworker is his capacity to manage the time and quality resources of the work that he does, during the interview and during the process and write-up of a decision. The question of how thorough the interview will be, as well as how deep the research will be into the COIs (which are vast in terms of information provided), this is at the discretion of the employee. This deep research is also providing the caseworker with enough argumentation to permit a positive decision, whereas the lack of information would possibly have the contrary effect. One of the informants shared his views on the subject:

"I could have just as easily not go into the details relating to his father's story... and when I did, what did he say? That being unable to pay off a loan he got for a small amount of money, he ended up being a slave for some years. This kind of information isn't just sitting on the top – you have to dig for it. I spent my Saturday night doing research on the cast system."

And another one, highlighting the importance of a deep understanding of the context:

"I always try to locate these kinds of elements in my stories. You have the main reasoning behind the applicant's claim, but you always need to search for more clues for potential risks in case he is deported, even if he has not said so explicitly. Most caseworkers don't go that deep, they consider it important that the asylum seeker should say it out loud to get the status. They don't consider important the clues connected to issues outside the 'story', which in my opinion would help you make up your mind."

This power to go deep is also related to and reflected in the terms of working conditions, as the caseworkers are somehow flexible in their working schedule. They are masters' of their

own work programming, within limits and as long as they meet some outputs that we will discuss later on. Most of the informants stated that they very often work on cases in late hours and weekends if needed, but they were not pressured to deliver a decision on a specific case if they thought they needed more time to work on it – a very useful condition to enable going deep into researching a case.

As it should be expected, performing repetitive researching on cases, considering also the geographic specialization of the caseworkers, would eventually build up a considerable level of experience and knowledge in specific regions. The caseworker will become familiar with the risks associated with the context, the particular fear and concerns of specific groups, but also reflect on ‘what works’ and ‘what could pass’ as legit ways of providing asylum to specific types of cases. This experience level, I regard as an additional factor which seems to be helping the caseworkers in dealing with complicated cases.

“Once I had these cases that were rejected. I didn’t know how I could have handled them in another way. I still ‘carry’ these cases with me. I know now that I could have been more agile if I had experience... It would be like “go ahead and tell me whatever inconsistency you want, I will find a way out later on!”

And another one:

“While I knew that they would be otherwise rejected, myself, having certain cases like these, I managed to provide a solid legal argument – using sound reasoning, and focusing not just on his issue of health, but the lack of support from his family, his inability to make a living. So I managed to constitute it on the base of a breach of ECHR articles. I didn’t ask anyone for this... I did it myself.”

Another aspect of ‘experience’ that was interesting to see how it enabled some of the participants, was their prior professional experience, working in the asylum but from the other side of things: legal and paralegal assistance to the migrants as members of NGO and solidarity groups. This helped them enhance empathy, develop their skills to connect with the migrants, and get to know the ropes of the system early on.

Moreover, in between the ‘caseworker society’ there are some very interesting dynamics that should be considered as strongly influential in the decision-making process. The peer dynamics were evident during the discussions. The influence can be direct and volitional, as it can take the form of advice from one colleague to another. Groups of friends would also meet outside the working premises, after working hours, and discuss on cases, sharing concerns,

tactics and ideas on how to reach solid legal ground for positive decisions. Efforts to influence other caseworkers extend beyond the close group of friends, as one informant describes:

“None of my colleagues has gone into the trouble researching the issue that deep. So, I took the initiative to discuss it with them – not formally, but informally, as colleagues should do. When I did so, three coworkers heard me out and copied my tactic, whilst beforehand they were rejecting those cases. The rest three or four in the office just ignored me.”

Others become more ‘creative’ in their strategies employed to influence their co-workers:

“Things are now tougher than what they used to be... inexperienced people are now working at the Service – and all they want is to finish their work as soon as possible cause they don’t care... You can just go and tell them ‘I have ready what you are looking for’, and give them the decision. They will take it, cause it makes their lives easy.”

One last factor that I identified in this respect is the very commonly cited fact that the Asylum Service is, first and foremost, focusing on numbers. That means that from the side of the administration more effort is being placed to have a ‘sufficient’ number of cases treated, than the quality of the substance of these cases. To highlight this fact, every single caseworker needs to conduct four interviews and deliver four decisions per week. In case these indicators are not met, the employee could be sanctioned by being deprived of his right to telework. Line managers were there to check the number of pending cases or ‘personal stock’ each employee had, and make sure enough pressure was put, in order to keep them motivated to keep these numbers low. So, in the words of one of the participants:

“There is a policy line that comes from above, but I would say it relates less to the content and more to the number of decisions. The Service cares more about quantity than quality. This is my conviction! They don’t care if I give 100 or 0 positive decisions. They care that I give them 100 decisions, not 98, not 90.”

This type of prioritization by the Service, for the informants, is linked mostly to the relation the Service has with other entities, like EASO and EU bodies, and also a general non-qualitative approach to migration issues on a higher political level. Whatever the case might be, this gives enough leeway (in both practical and psychological terms) for the caseworkers to handle the cases the way they see fit.

4.5 Preventive factors

The Service's 'focus on numbers' has a dual effect, and acts also as a factor which prevents or limits the capacity of the caseworkers to push their decision in favor of the migrants. This happens in a very straightforward way, as the pressure to deliver decisions at a certain speed restricts the time that they can invest into doing proper, in-depth research about a case. It puts a huge psychological strain on them, as they are pushed to deliver in rates much higher than what they expressed to be comfortable with, in order ensure quality work. This, unfortunately is far from being a phenomenon reserved for Greece, as it seems that asylum caseworkers are far worse off in countries like UK where the management is "obsessed" with statistics, leading to the treatment of decision results as a "lottery" (Brewer, 2018).

I found particularly thought-provoking that in such an indirect way the Asylum Service was being able to influence the decision-making process. By judging that some cases are 'easier' than others (claimants from Pakistan or Albania) they would allocate more fast-track procedures and demand more 'cases per week' by the caseworkers. These could be done by either assigning all of them to specialized Asylum Units or by considering them as 'extra work' on top of the standard work (the caseworker would be assigned four 'normal' cases, and an 'easy' one). The caseworkers, in their turn, wouldn't be able to go in-depth, as they might have wanted, since there would be under pressure of the system to deliver the expected number of cases on time.

The effect of workload on the quality of work is recognized as one of the most detrimental factors by several of the informants, also linked to having a long-term impact on their own psychology as well. The majority of participants spoke of personal feelings compatible with the clinical representation of occupational burnout, a situation which is surmounting to 'epidemic' proportions in their own words. One of them, described an interesting correlation:

"Talking about political parties and your political ideology and how all these are affecting your decisions, I find interesting that, increasingly lately, fatigue plays a major role in this respect. I see colleagues who are left-wing, being burned out from the immense workload, and now they are treating the claimants differently from what I would expect them to treat them, with their left-wing ideology."

And another one:

"There is a need to put much personal effort in order to be able to remain upright to your beliefs and to perform your job with integrity. It could be the case that after some time, you can't keep up with the long hours and you will eventually want to

write-off hurriedly the case – either positively or negatively. So there is a considerable risk involved.”

From the side of the Asylum Service, there is the Quality Control Department, which is tasked to ensure that the decisions issued by the caseworkers comply with the international norms and standards. The Department is staffed by seasoned caseworkers, permanent employees of the service who apply to work for this specific department. They would pick at random specific cases to review, as well as cases of ‘specific interest’ – such as deviant cases. The participants had mixed feelings about the Department’s work, as they often felt that their counterparts were often inexperienced or negatively biased. The power of the Department was also often challenged by the participants, as it is was stressed by one of the informants:

“I reached a positive decision all by myself, without asking anyone. If I were to ask the Quality Control Department, they would have said that my reasoning was flawed. They would ask that I change my decision, which I wouldn’t. I would publish the decision. They would ask me to take it down, which I wouldn’t. I would ask them to do that themselves. This is why I didn’t even care to ask.”

The Quality Control Department would also make sure that the directives provided by EASO or UNHCR or the Asylum Service are fully considered, thus contributing to a greater chain of control of the decision-making from the top-down.

A limited yet existing preventive reaction might come from the line managers of the caseworkers. In their most part, the line managers would impose their power in their subordinates with regards to the quantity of the output, as we already discussed. But there were exceptions to this, where the managers would interfere in the essence of the work more directly, as it was experienced by few of the participants – who would go as far as to say that they have been bullied by their line managers:

“If I still had the same manager, I wouldn’t know what to do. She would barge into my interviews and intervene... ‘Don’t ask these kind of things!’ she would order me – and not to mention that she was totally incompetent!”

Another external factor controlling and affecting the decision-making process is the presence of legal experts working for UNHCR. These ‘legal experts’ were readily available to be used by the caseworkers as ad hoc legal advisors to difficult cases. Interestingly enough, all of my informants would unanimously agree that these individuals were providing this service with an amazing degree of professionalism. Having attained a mutual trust and good working relationship,

the caseworkers would run by the UNHCR experts their cases to see if the reasoning provided for granting asylum is legally sound. While this is not a necessary procedure, many of the participants felt that this would safeguard their decisions (especially those liminal 'grey zone' cases of our particular focus) against being challenged by anyone on a later stage. While the relationship between the caseworkers and the UNHCR legal experts is a positive one, the effect of the latter's involvement should be considered as preventive to the arbitrariness of one's asylum decisions and a self-imposed limit to the caseworkers' 'absolute power'.

There are several other ways the system is able to control the decisions that are issued. While it is difficult to say that there is a clear 'political line' for who should be granted asylum, the participants described challenging cases, such as the double standards that are nowadays in place for the people fleeing the warzones of the middle East. The Asylum Service maintains a database of acceptable 'template decisions' that one can refer to and use as a base for his own decision. The content of the database is in itself a form of political control, as described by one of the informants:

“While other decisions could take one or two days to write, I can do a Syria case in just an hour. I use the fast-track template available and all the reasoning and background information is already there. Very specific stuff. For Yemen, where the situation is pretty much the same, there is no such thing. For me, to produce a positive decision I had to build everything up from the scratch. It's a political decision why we treat Syria one way and Yemen in another way.”

Since, as we discussed, the power of the caseworker is absolute in terms of issuing a decision – the only way that the system is able to control the decisions is to change the caseworker. This was apparently the case in some occasions. Most notably, according to the information that some of the participants had, in the case of the 8 Turkish soldiers fleeing the Erdogan regime after the failed coup d'état attempt of July 2016, the Service's leadership was allegedly very directly intervening, changing the file holders of the cases to caseworkers that would comply with the wishes of the central government on the issue. Likewise, some of the informants said that cases related to issues of national security, such as the fate of Kurd Turkish nationals, are going under heavy scrutiny by the system, through the Quality Control Department. Another participant recalled a case where the system apparently became aggressively invasive was when one of his colleagues issued a positive asylum decision to an Albanian national: “We don't give asylum to Albanians”, was the informal rationale, under the all too often argument of the

possibility of 'refugee overflow' as one positive decision could attract thousands of others in a domino chain of events.

4.6 Beyond resistance

Alternative modes of struggle

What we analyzed above are ways in which the caseworkers are challenging the 'system' and the migration policies through their power in the adjudication process of asylum claims. What soon became evident in the discussions was that the caseworkers were able to find other ways to 'resist', not related to the cases, and provide support to the migrants.

Beyond the cases as such, some of the participants tried to affect positively the environment they controlled around the migrant. They got into verbal fights with the policemen who disrespected the claimants (taunting, name-calling, etc.). At the same time, participants spoke of colleagues that at instances acted as whistleblowers, providing information about the horrid conditions of detention to other NGOs and human rights organizations.

The same thing extends to the relation between the fixed-term employees of the Asylum Service and the regular employees. The participants presented some lucid descriptions of the big division between the two groups. They saw the lack of humanitarian motivation as the biggest flaw in the regular employees, as most of them 'just landed there', and did not want necessarily desired to work with migrant populations. In relation to this, the reported incidents of racist behavior towards the claimants, inappropriate behaviors which go against the Service's regulations, and of course hostility towards the fixed-term contract employees, which were seen as opportunistic intruders to the organization.

The fixed-term contract caseworkers have also managed to form an active workers union. This union has acted as a forum where the employees share also their opinions and frustrations about the situation of the migrants and the asylum seekers in Greece. The fact that, at the time of conducting the interviews, the caseworkers had not been paid for months had eventually changed the agenda of the union, which was monopolized by the burning issue.

The participants described how they've heard of several of their colleagues managing to organize into a small disobedience group, when the EU-Turkey Statement was signed. The Asylum Service was looking internally for employees that would be interested to change position and work for the implementation of the Statement by performing the admissibility check. According to some participants, several of the employees grouped together to face the

management and demanded to be excluded on the basis of the illegality of the Statement and with the threat of resigning from their posts all together.

Another creative way in which the caseworkers try to 'resist' the perceived inhumanity of the system is to use their position to enact activities of solidarity to the asylum seekers. With an expressed understanding of going 'beyond the call of duty', they would try to find time to help the migrants with 'minor' things such as to help them book visits to health clinics, liaise with other NGOs to provide accommodation, refer them to appropriate structures for psychosocial support, speak to them about their rights, help them get social number, or even unofficially guide them through the complexities of the Greek asylum system.

A lost cause?

During the course of my discussions with the informants, I witnessed a very peculiar phenomenon: it seemed as if the caseworkers were taking part in an informal contest of who is able to push the limits of the system to more extreme limits, and give positive asylum decisions where no one else was able to do so in the past. There was an evident well-mannered antagonism between them in becoming more creative and more effective in their work, in achieving their goal to support the migrants, as claimants and as human beings in need for help. The legal challenges were seen as milestones in this race: Could I be the first to give asylum to someone from country x or y? Could I be the one to base a positive decision on x or y argument? These types of questions seem to fuel their drive towards the pro-migrant cause.

Unfortunately, the effect of such aspects had severe limitations when contrasted against other, much bleaker facets of the work. What I witnessed, in a proportion of the participants to the study, was a tendency for the work to negatively affect the "activist within" and limit or erode the radical political and ideological basis that once motivated the person to become involved with the migrant populations. First and foremost, the work as such seemed to be energy-depleting for most of the informants, who described how their pastime interactions with the migrant communities, as well as their political expressions of pro-migrant demands, were becoming increasingly limited:

"For sure after this work I am unable to do anything that involves any kind protest. I will definitely won't go to help with a food distribution for the migrants. Before I got involved in this work, I used to do these stuff all the time – now I am fed up. I am done."

The second aspect is a realization about the relation between the imagined and actual goals of their position. Participants with a background in humanitarian work were fast at

recognizing how much different working in this post can be in relation to working for some of the humanitarian actors. The capacity to follow one's principles often collided with the working modalities, not just those imposed by the Asylum Service, but those also inherent in the job of the caseworker as such. In the words of one of the informants, who soon understood that she could not use her post to help the people she wanted to help:

"I have become harder. I make distinctions. I started with a different philosophy, a different ideology and then I understood I can't do this in this work. You open the door and you perform triage: You place humans into categories, Pakistani economic migrants goes here; the other goes there. Beforehand it was all about categories of needs; now it's all about categories of people. It's crazy!"

Of course, another concept that soon became evident in my conversations with the caseworkers was the fact that most of them had to a certain degree been affected by vicarious traumatization. The work of the caseworker indeed entails much exposure, albeit indirect, to some of the most horrid expressions of humanity – a fact well documented well outside the Greek context (Baillot, Cowan, & Munro, 2013). This effect is exacerbated by the high levels of empathy that these particular caseworkers had, due to their personal political or ethical moral code. One of them, tried to explain to me how this trauma affected his character:

"I have become insensitive. I go to work and my daily routine includes listening to rape stories. It's routine to hear about the baby that was disemboweled by the Tutsi in the middle of nowhere. It's sad, and I am not happy to say that after a while, empathy goes off the window. You can't listen to the girl, at 9 o'clock in the morning, about her getting raped by 15 militias, cause then you are toast - and that's my everyday work we are talking about..."

Adding to this, some of them expressed how hard it was for them to have to live with the sense of guilt and the idea of having rejected an applicant who would then be exposed to risk, either following detention or deportation. Whether this rejection was based on a legally sound basis or not, they felt they could have done better in producing a different decision.

Finally, there was an expressed 'sense of futility' in relation to the efforts of the caseworkers to provide legal documents to the migrants. Most of the migrants in Athens live under the radar, as the system has focused its efforts at the islands, as well as in specific areas (i.e. camps, shelters) in an effort to "compartmentalize" the problem. The migrants are either homeless or living in squats, or packed in basements in deprived areas of the city. They have no access to some of the most basic needs and there is little to none interest from the organized state to put

integration on the agenda. Most of the participants, while not underestimating the importance of having a legal permit to stay in the country, they were very reluctant to see this life as sustaining bare life without being able to produce any quality elements.

“I felt that through this job I could make a significant difference in someone’s life; I will recognize him as a refugee or give him subsidiary protection, as he deserves it, and this would have an impact. Now I know. This is just an illusion.”

The very same people packed in the lines in front of the Asylum Service’s main buildings in Athens to get asylum, would be the ones encountered the very next day sleeping on carton boxes in Kypseli square. The participants, being able to see the migrants’ story both before and after the journey, are in a privileged spot to make comparisons. Taking as an example a ‘grey zone’ case, they could have helped a migrant get asylum in Greece, get away from the Mazar-i-Sharif, but still land in the hands of drug dealers, human traffickers, forced prostitution, and other kinds of hardships in European soil. In this way, their own political ideologies are directly affected and their pro-migrant struggle is put to question in terms of demands and content:

“Advocating for “open borders” is not enough. It’s a nice thing to say, but insufficient. For these people, the small ever-day demands are equally important. You shouldn’t let your maximalist fantasies be driven by your ideals. Ideals are good, but pragmatic elements need to be considered if you don’t want to live in your imaginary bubble.”

It is very interesting to see how the caseworkers are self-reflexive and critical about their personal capacity to produce solid and long-term solutions to the problems of the people they are trying to support. Their failure to do so has a detrimental effect on their perception of their own capacity to resist the system, effectively transforming, to a bigger or smaller extend, their political self.

* * *

5. Discussion

5.1 General conclusions

The elements of resistance that we encounter in the practices of the caseworkers fit elegantly with the Foucauldian idea of *contre-conduite* (counter-conduct), which is 'the struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others' (Foucault, 2007, p. 268). The participants have managed to find creative ways to avoid 'being governed quite so much' (Foucault, 1997, p. 44). Their acts are not aiming at any form of liberation from the overarching power of the state on migration issues and thus it is not emancipatory. There is no social revolution, no soul of revolt, and it's neither a part of a wider and organized movement, but their activities are identified at the micro-level: "in the aesthetic of self-creation" and "in the transgression and contestation of societal norms; in the disruption of metanarratives of humanism" (Jessica Kulnynych quoted in Death, 2010, p. 238). Their personal reading of the letter of the law aims at widening the sphere of protection for these people and projects their own sense of justice and acts pragmatically as a form of protest against the migration policies. This should not be regarded as a form of legal opportunism, as there is no abuse of the proper intention of the legal arrangement (the spirit of the law) which is indeed the protection of vulnerable people.

The participants of the study did not recognize their activities as a form of resistance towards the migration policies they personally oppose, neither had they seen their work as an extension of their personal political struggle – even if they recognized the political essence of it. In contrast to the resistance theories of Gramsci (1971; Rose, 2002, p. 385), where resistance is intentionally and consciously opposing the standard practices in society, this is compatible with Foucault's theory, where resistance can take much less conscious forms (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). The caseworkers' resistance is actual and the fact that it is not recognized by the actors as such is not a sufficient condition to discredit or disregard it.

The system itself seems to allow for both the presence and the actions of these dissident employees. As scholars of biopolitical power theorize, the system "is not concerned with the details of individual behavior, the effectiveness of combinations and use of tendencies, and of statistics" (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014, p. 119). The state can neither be interested in the individual nor aim for the total subordination of everyone. The caseworkers' actions are constantly monitored as they are uploaded in the platform, in a Deleuzian 'society of control'-type of model, where direct interventions occur only whenever necessary (Deleuze, 1992). Such could be considered the deviant cases of the 8 Turkish soldiers and the close monitoring of Kurds of

Turkish nationality, issues tightly connected to the national interests and security of the Greek state. The rest of the decisions, the system can easily let go under the radar, possibly utilizing their content in its favor, as examples of dissent could be interpreted as a sign of a free, unrestricted, and uncontrolled procedure.

As a natural extension of this discussion, we witness that the state has found alternative ways of exercising its power, without the need to micro-manage the asylum caseworkers. Through new means of governmentality, a 'conduct of conduct' (Dean, 2010, p. 17), the state sets the 'way of doing things' and only by extension, the nature of things themselves. For instance, it shall not dictate the content of a decision on an asylum claim from Pakistan, Georgia or Albania, but by officially channeling all these decisions in a fast-track procedures, by specialized Asylum Units, and by having different output expectations to them (i.e. decisions per week), it determines to a great extent their ultimate fate.

The next step in bridging our initial theoretical framework with the findings of the research, is to connect the agency of the asylum caseworkers with a performative theory of resistance. For this, the work of Harding (2017) helps illustrate how the works of Butler (1990, 1997) and Barad (2007) on performativity work in complementarity and may be used to explore resistance within organizational systems. According to Harding, resistance "may take the form of a refusal to accept challenges to one's identity or sense of self that threaten to reduce one to abjection, to not knowing who or what one is, and to being unable to speak from such" (2017, p. 16). This makes a perfect fit with the participant's precondition of "free space" as a precondition to perform one's duties in this particular post – as one of the informants would put it: "...if I didn't have this freedom, I would quit". Moreover, Harding's theory describes how resistance materializes beyond saying "no" to power, such as by the "agentive act of turning for recognition to colleagues or workplace friends" (2017, p. 17) – another fit with the findings of the study, reminding us how several of the caseworkers got together in unofficial communities of like-minded people.

Finally, what is left to address is the last analogy that I initially considered, between the asylum caseworkers' struggle and that of Abu-Lughod's Bedouin women – an analogy meant to serve the underlying quest to understand the capacity of resistance to have liberating effect on the self or the personal cause. To this, the findings of the study were illuminating, as the futility of their efforts were made clear by the agents of resistance themselves. The asylum seekers were already "enmeshed [...] in an extraordinarily complex set of power relations" (Abu Lughod, 1990, p. 52), and thus the positive asylum decisions did not succeed in affecting much their quality of life, nor even to address a good part of their protection concerns. Except for the fear of detention and deportation, most of the refugees would remain in the shadows, bound there by the absence

of a willingness of the society to integrate them, and also powerless against the economic forces of neoliberalist economy running rampant in Greece in the years of the crisis. The asylum seekers by transforming themselves to refugees effectively cross over to different types of authority structures withholding them to 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998). Moreover, the caseworkers were depleted of their energy and willingness to continue their pro-migrant activist struggle outside the office and the work apparently discouraged their participation in other forms of solidarity activities.

5.2 Recommendations

The political and economic hardships of our era are strenuously pushing to lower the bar in terms of protection of the asylum seeking migrant population (AIC, 2014; Holmes & Castañeda, 2016; Wieviorka, 2018). I believe that the contribution of these particular caseworkers is the fact that they are pushing in the exact opposite direction (to raise the level of protection), and the same goes for the numerous other caseworkers who perform their duties in a similar manner and with the same principles.

My recommendation is that the Asylum Service embraces the peculiarity of the work done by these caseworkers, as I identify two major positive outcomes from their conduct. Evidently, the first one is the increased protection and much needed minimization of risk for the vulnerable asylum seekers. The second one is perhaps less evident, and it is their contribution to jurisprudence and the development of refugee law and legal thought on protection issues.

The adjudication of an asylum claims is a form of judicial interpretation, and by nature of all forms of interpretations, we encounter grey zones – instances of ambiguous decision-making, as the ones we discussed. This is by no means specific to international refugee law, but it's a characteristic inherent to law, which is as much an art as it is a science (Linderfalk, 2015; Williams, 1999). In practice there is a need for the hermeneutical expertise of the jurist which drives the exegesis of the legal text. In each asylum claim, the abstract definitions of the Geneva Convention and the EU Directive on subsidiary protection, complemented by the relevant case-law of the Courts need to be refitted into the specificity of each particular context. This leaves space for subjectivity and agency, and the adjudicator (who in our case is the asylum caseworker) has to be guided by the spirit of the law, following definitions based on a contemporary understanding of their nature. The migration context is changing and together with it the protection needs are also evolving; for example, issues like human trafficking and indiscriminate violence due to conflict, although they most probably existed still in the 1950's, they were not yet distinct part of the legal thought. Nowadays they constitute legitimate arguments to consider for the provision of

international protection. What we experience in our caseworkers' conduct is the ephemeral broadening of the interpretation of the law, which helps the legal thought expand and respond to the ever evolving context, as per the spirit of the law, and this kind of caseworkers are the vectors of this process.

An important procedural safeguard is that the quality of the legal text of the decision is of the outmost importance, as the nature and quality of the legal argument will need to be defended in Quality Control Department or at the Court of Second Instance. The participants were explicit about 'not helping someone come in through the window', and the very fact that they are 'utilizing perfectly legal means to protect the asylum seekers'. After all, the system as such seems adequately equipped to detect and defend against arbitrary use of the caseworkers' power. To come back to our fortress metaphor, there have always been ways to detect the work of the sappers, much like they did in the medieval times: "The prudent garrison commanders might place bowls of water on a wall-walk or on the ground, so that any disturbances underneath would register as ripples on the water." (Gravett, 2002, p. 47)

5.3 Suggestions for further research

There are several different angles from which we could view this very interesting matter. To begin with, there is much space for research on the fundamental assumptions of this current paper: How much does the political convictions of the caseworker affect their decisions? A quantitative study could be very useful in correlating the two. Moreover, I believe that an interesting alternative approach would be to contrast opposing instances of resistance. As the participants described, there were contradicting views within the population of caseworkers, as some of them could be defined as 'pro-migrant' and others as 'racist'. In the same way that I analyzed the agency of pro-migrant employees as form of resistance against migration policies, one can see the agency of 'racist/xenophobic' employees as resistance towards the demographic and cultural overrun of Europe by foreign elements, in the respective narrative. Yet another interesting comparative design would be between the two distinct caseworker populations, namely the fixed-term contract and the regular employees, and how these two groups relate to migration policies, political ideologies, and decision outcomes.

Another very interesting focus for further research could be looking into the incidence of this phenomenon – how often it is that caseworkers are as biased as the participants to the study. By virtue of the nature of the research design I am unable to conclude safely if this is high or low. Given the peculiarities of the sample it might be safe to guess that the phenomenon is very

restricted, as its effects are limited to a small fraction of the cases of a small fraction of the population of caseworkers. Still, it would be valid to see, in a society of increasingly polarized political views, if the capacity of the caseworkers to conduct their work relatively unrestrained from their political biases is significant. In this sense, deviant behaviors could come from either left-wing or right-wing (pro-migrant and xenophobic) employees.

5.4 Endnote

Discussions with the asylum caseworkers who participated in my research were characterized by a stimulating duality. At most times, they were radiating an immense positive energy, a humanitarian vigor and a passion for promoting their principles of egalitarianism and social equality in a world of apathy and individualism. The experience of talking with them was captivating. Yet at times, they would reflect the darkness of their claimant's stories of horror and despair, and the feats of their struggle against all odds would be obscured by the veil of futility. This constant dialogue of the two dimensions signifies the level of connectedness between the worlds of the destitute migrants with the politically suppressed middle-class European caseworker, as the latter identifies in helping the asylum seeker a chance to get small, practical victory, against the omnipotent overlord.

As a final note, I would like to conclude this paper in the same place it begun, noting that it's been long since Europe's fortresses have been turned into touristic attractions. They were rendered useless by the fact that the states of the old continent stopped fighting one another, but also because of the fact that the means of warfare changed so dramatically, that they became practically inefficient. Following this metaphor to its natural conclusion, 'Fortress Europe' will come to an end either when we stop understanding migration in terms of clash between races, cultures, and classes or when migration itself is transformed in ways beyond the control of the administrative bureaucracies of the states. Unfortunately, the latest political developments in the West, with the rise of populism and xenophobia, seem to push Europe to the opposite direction, and don't leave much room for optimism. It's fair to say that the walls of the Fortress hold strong, virtually untouched by the sappers' efforts. But it's also fair to hope that hopefully soon the walls of 'Fortress Europe', the beachheads of the beautiful islands of Eastern Aegean, will become touristic attractions (again).

* * *

Bibliography

- Abu Lughod, L. (1990). The romance of resistance: Tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women. *American Ethnologist*, 17(1), 41–55.
- AFP. (2017, November 14). EU's policy of helping Libya intercept migrants is "inhuman", says UN. *Agence France-Presse - The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/14/eu-libya-coastguard-detention-centres-migration-mediterranean-un-zeid-raad-al-husseini>
- Agamben, G. (1998). *Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford University Press.
- AIC. (2014). *The U.S. Must Not Lower the Bar on Protecting Children Fleeing Violence* (Press Release). American Immigration Council. Retrieved from <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/news/us-must-not-lower-bar-protecting-children-fleeing-violence>
- Allen, A. (1998). Power trouble: Performativity as critical theory. *Constellations*, 5(4), 456–471.
- ASA. (1999). Code of Ethics of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics. American Sociological Association. Retrieved from http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/code_of_ethics_aug_2017_2_1.pdf
- Asylum Service. (2018a). *Statistics of Asylum Service - AIDA report on Greece 2017* (No. ΑΠ 3/2018) (p. 28). Ministry of Migration Policy. Retrieved from <http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/AIDA-Report-2018.pdf>
- Asylum Service. (2018b, February). Commonly Asked Questions. Ministry of Migration Policy. Retrieved from http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/final_QA_GR_06_2018fv12.pdf
- Baillot, H., Cowan, S., & Munro, V. E. (2013). Second-hand Emotion? Exploring the Contagion and Impact of Trauma and Distress in the Asylum Law Context. *Journal of Law and Society*, 40(4), 509–540.

- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. duke university Press.
- Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 10(2), 141–163.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/004912418101000205>
- Black, R. (1994). Livelihoods under Stress: A Case Study of Refugee Vulnerability in Greece. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7(4), 360–377. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/7.4.360>
- Brewer, K. (2018, May 8). Asylum whistleblower: Decisions are a 'lottery.' *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/stories-43555766>
- Bryman, A. (2015). *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997). *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*. Stanford University Press.
- Carr, M. (2016). *Fortress Europe: Dispatches from a Gated Continent*. New Press.
- Cavounidis, J. (2002). Migration in Southern Europe and the Case of Greece. *International Migration*, 40(1), 45–70. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00185>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. SAGE.
- Conover, P. J., & Feldman, S. (1981). The Origins and Meaning of Liberal/Conservative Self-Identifications. *American Journal of Political Science*, 25(4), 617–645.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2110756>
- Dahlvik, J. (2017). Asylum as construction work: Theorizing administrative practices. *Migration Studies*, 5(3), 369–388. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnx043>
- Danziger, S., Levav, J., & Avnaim-Pesso, L. (2011). Extraneous factors in judicial decisions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(17), 6889–6892.
- Davidson, A. I. (1997). *Foucault and His Interlocutors*. University of Chicago Press.

- De Boer, P. K., Sonderegger, R., De Boer, K., & Sonderegger, P. R. (2011). *Conceptions of Critique in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dean, M. (2010). *Governmentality: Power and rule in modern society*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Death, C. (2010). Counter-conducts: A Foucauldian analytics of protest. *Social Movement Studies*, 9(3), 235–251.
- Dehghan, S. K. (2017, September 10). Migrant sea route to Italy is world's most lethal. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/11/migrant-death-toll-rises-after-clampdown-on-east-european-borders>
- Deleuze, G. (1992). Postscript on the Societies of Control. *October*, 59, 3–7.
- Duckitt, J., & Sibley, C. G. (2016). Personality, Ideological Attitudes, and Group Identity as Predictors of Political Behavior in Majority and Minority Ethnic Groups. *Political Psychology*, 37(1), 109–124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12222>
- EASO. (2014). *EASO Practical Guide: Personal Interview*. Retrieved from <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/EASO-Practical-Guide-Personal-Interview-EN.pdf>
- Ekers, M., & Loftus, A. (2008). The power of water: developing dialogues between Foucault and Gramsci. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26(4), 698–718.
- Etikan, I., Alkassim, R., & Abubakar, S. (2016). Comparison of Snowball Sampling and Sequential Sampling Technique. *Biometrics and Biostatistics International Journal*, 3(1), 00055.
- European Commission. (2018, May 19). Common European Asylum System. Retrieved May 19, 2018, from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum_en
- Fakiolas, R. (2003). Regularising undocumented immigrants in Greece: procedures and effects. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29(3), 535–561.
- Fakiolas, R., & King, R. (1996). Emigration, Return, Immigration: A Review and Evaluation of Greece's Postwar Experience of International Migration. *International Journal of*

- Population Geography*, 2(2), 171–190. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1220\(199606\)2:2<171::AID-IJPG27>3.0.CO;2-2](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1220(199606)2:2<171::AID-IJPG27>3.0.CO;2-2)
- Fassin, D. (2001). The biopolitics of otherness: Undocumented foreigners and racial discrimination in French public debate. *Anthropology Today*, 17(1), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.00039>
- Follis, K. S. (2012). *Building Fortress Europe: The Polish-Ukrainian Frontier*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36(6), 717–732.
- Foucault, M. (1978). The history of sexuality, volume I. *New York: Vintage*.
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish : the birth of the prison* (p. 333). Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1997). *The politics of truth* (Second). Los Angeles CA: Semiotext(e).
- Foucault, M. (2003). *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. (M. Berani & A. Fontana, Eds.). New York: Picador. <https://doi.org/10.2307/27515985>
- Foucault, M. (2006). *The History of Sexuality* (Vol. 5). Vintage Books. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1904618>
- Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, territory, population: lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. Springer.
- Foucault, M., & Rabinow, P. (2000). *The essential works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984. Vol. 1, Ethics : subjectivity and truth*. Penguin.
- FRA. (2018, March 21). Migrant pushbacks a growing concern in some Member States. Retrieved May 20, 2018, from <http://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2018/migrant-pushbacks-growing-concern-some-member-states>
- Gebrewold, B. (2016). *Africa and Fortress Europe: Threats and Opportunities*. Routledge.

- Geddes, A. (2003). *Still Beyond Fortress Europe? Patterns and Pathways in EU Migration Policy*. Queens University Belfast. Retrieved from <https://ideas.repec.org/p/erp/queens/p0037.html>
- Gibb, R., & Good, A. (2013). Do the Facts Speak for Themselves? Country of Origin Information in French and British Refugee Status Determination Procedures. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 25(2), 291–322. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eet015>
- Goodwin-Gill, G. S., & McAdam, J. (2007). *The Refugee in International Law*. Oxford University Press.
- Gramsci, A., Hoare, Q., & Nowell-Smith, G. (1971). Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci.
- Gravett, C. (2002). *Medieval Siege Warfare*. Osprey Publishing, Limited.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2(163–194), 105.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Guild, E. (2016). The bitter fruits of a common asylum policy. In T. Balzacq & S. Carrera, *Security Versus Freedom?* (pp. 75–90). Routledge.
- Gyulai, G. (2013). *Credibility assessment in asylum procedures: a multidisciplinary training manual*. Hungarian Helsinki Committee.
- Harding, N. H., Ford, J., & Lee, H. (2017). Towards a Performative Theory of Resistance: Senior Managers and Revolting Subject(ivity)s. *Organization Studies*, 38, 1209–1232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840616685360>
- Herlihy, J., Gleeson, K., & Turner, S. (2010). What Assumptions about Human Behaviour Underlie Asylum Judgments? *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 22(3), 351–366. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeq027>

- Herz, A., Peters, L., & Truschkat, I. (2014). How to do qualitative structural analysis: the qualitative interpretation of network maps and narrative interviews (Vol. 16). Presented at the Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2010). *The practice of qualitative research*. Sage.
- Holmes, S. M., & Castañeda, H. (2016). Representing the “European refugee crisis” in Germany and beyond: Deservingness and difference, life and death. *American Ethnologist*, 43(1), 12–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12259>
- IRBC. (2008, October 10). Interpretation of the Convention Refugee Definition in the Case Law. Retrieved April 5, 2018, from <http://www.irbcisr.gc.ca/Eng/BoaCom/references/LegJur/Pages/RefDef.aspx#table>
- Jeandesboz, J., & Pallister-Wilkins, P. (2016). Crisis, routine, consolidation: The politics of the mediterranean migration crisis. *Mediterranean Politics*, 21(2), 316–320.
- Kagan, M. (2015). Believable Victims: Asylum Credibility and the Struggle for Objectivity. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 16(1), 123–131.
- Kaunert, C., & Léonard, S. (2012). The development of the EU asylum policy: venue-shopping in perspective. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 19(9), 1396–1413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2012.677191>
- Kontos, P. C., & Poland, B. D. (2009). Mapping new theoretical and methodological terrain for knowledge translation: contributions from critical realism and the arts. *Implementation Science: IS*, 4, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-4-1>
- Lemke, T. (2011). *Biopolitics : an advanced introduction*. New York University Press.
- Lilja, M., & Vinthagen, S. (2014). Sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower: resisting what power with what resistance? *Journal of Political Power*, 7(1), 107–126.
- Linderfalk, U. (2015). Is Treaty Interpretation an Art or a Science? International Law and Rational Decision Making. *European Journal of International Law*, 26(1), 169–189. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chv008>

- Ludwig, B. (2013). "Wiping the Refugee Dust from My Feet": Advantages and Burdens of Refugee Status and the Refugee Label. *International Migration*, 54(1), 5–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12111>
- Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample Size in Qualitative Interview Studies. *Qualitative Health Research*, 26, 1753–1760.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315617444>
- Marx, R. (2002). The Criteria of Applying the "Internal Flight Alternative" Test in National Refugee Status Determination Procedures. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 14(2_and_3), 179–218. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/14.2_and_3.179
- Millbank, J. (2009). 'The ring of truth': A case study of credibility assessment in particular social group refugee determinations. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 21(1), 1–33.
- Mills, C. (2003). Contesting the Political: Butler and Foucault on Power and Resistance. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 11(3), 253–272. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9760.00177>
- Mol. (2015). *The Greek Government's Road Map on Asylum for 2015 (follow-up to the Revised Greek Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management)* (No. 6817/15) (p. 18). Brussels: Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform. Retrieved from <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6817-2015-INIT/en/pdf>
- MSF. (2014). *The "Invisible Suffering" of Migrants Detained In Greece*. ATHENS/BRUSSELS/NEW YORK: Médecins Sans Frontières. Retrieved from <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news-stories/special-report/invisible-suffering-migrants-detained-greece>
- O'reilly, M., & Parker, N. (2013). 'Unsatisfactory Saturation': a critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample sizes in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 13(2), 190–197.
- Pagden, A. (2003). *Peoples and empires : a short history of European migration, exploration, and conquest, from Greece to the present*. Modern Library.

- Phillips, B. (2012, December 20). High police support for Greece's Golden Dawn. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/europe/2012/12/52586.html>
- Pickett, B. L. (1996). Foucault and the Politics of Resistance. *Polity*, 28(4), 445–466.
- Powell, J. L. (2012). Social work, power and performativity. *China Journal of Social Work*, 5(1), 67–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17525098.2012.656364>
- Quie, M., & Hakimi, H. (2018). EU pays to stop migrants. *The World Today - Chatham House*, (December-January). Retrieved from <https://www.chathamhouse.org/node/33546>
- Ramji-Nogales, J., Schoenholtz, A. I., & Schrag, P. G. (2007). Refugee roulette: Disparities in asylum adjudication. *Stan. L. Rev.*, 60, 295.
- Roos, C. (2013). *The EU and Immigration Policies: Cracks in the Walls of Fortress Europe?* Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Rose, M. (2002). The seductions of resistance: power, politics, and a performative style of systems. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 20(4), 383–400.
- Rozakou, K. (2012). The biopolitics of hospitality in Greece: Humanitarianism and the management of refugees. *American Ethnologist*, 39(3), 562–577.
- Sitaropoulos, N. (2000). Modern Greek Asylum Policy and Practice in the Context of the Relevant European Developments. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13(1), 105–117. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/13.1.105>
- Skordas, A., & Sitaropoulos, N. (2004). Why Greece is not a Safe Host Country for Refugees. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 16(1), 25–52. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/16.1.25>
- Smith, H. (2017, December 22). “Welcome to prison”: winter hits in one of Greece's worst refugee camps. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/22/this-isnt-europe-life-greece-worst-refugee-camps>

- Tazzioli, M., & Walters, W. (2016). The Sight of Migration: Governmentality, Visibility and Europe's Contested Borders. *Global Society*, 30(3), 445–464.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2016.1173018>
- Tobin, K. A. (2004). *Politics and population control : a documentary history*. Greenwood Press.
- Trading Economics. (2018, February). Greece Asylum Applications 2011-2018. Retrieved May 20, 2018, from <https://tradingeconomics.com/greece/asylum-applications>
- Trochim, W. (2000). *The Research Methods Knowledge Base* (2nd edition). Cincinnati, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing.
- Tsimitakis, M. (2015, October 14). Opinion - Greece's Fascists Are Gaining. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/05/opinion/greeces-fascists-are-gaining.html>
- Tsitsas, N. (2013, April 27). Εντός Ιουνίου ο διορισμός 1.800 επιτυχόντων ΑΣΕΠ. *Ethnos*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/gS4gMA>
- Turnbull, S. (2016). 'Stuck in the middle': Waiting and uncertainty in immigration detention. *Time & Society*, 25(1), 61–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X15604518>
- UNHCR. The Problem of Manifestly Unfounded or Abusive Applications for Refugee Status or Asylum, No. 30 (XXXIV) § (1983). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/excom/exconc/3ae68c6118/problem-manifestly-unfounded-abusive-applications-refugee-status-asylum.html>
- UNHCR. (1992). *Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees* (2nd ed.). Geneva. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4d93528a9.pdf>
- UNHCR. (2013). *Beyond Proof: Credibility Assessment in EU Asylum Systems* (p. 290). Brussels: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/51a8a08a9/full-report-beyond-proof-credibility-assessment-eu-asylum-systems.html>

- UNHCR. (2015). *Procedural Standards for RSD under UNHCR's Mandate*. Geneva: UNHCR.
- Walters, W. (2015). Reflections on Migration and Governmentality. *movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, 1(1). Retrieved from <http://movements-journal.org/issues/01.grenzregime/04.walters--migration.governmentality.html>
- Wartenberg, T. E. (1990). *The Forms of Power: From Domination to Transformation*. Temple University Press.
- Wieviorka, M. (2018). Europe Facing Evil: Xenophobia, Racism, Anti-Semitism and Terrorism. In M. Castells, O. Bouin, J. Caraça, G. Cardoso, & J. Thompson (Eds.), *Europe's Crises*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Williams, J. (1999). Is Law and Art or a Science?: Comments on Objectivity, Feminism, and Power. *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, 7(2), 355–372.
- Witte, G. (2018, January 15). Conditions are horrific at Greece's 'island prisons' for refugees. Is that the point? *Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/conditions-are-horrific-at-greeces-island-prisons-for-refugees-is-that-the-point/2018/01/15/b93765ac-f546-11e7-9af7-a50bc3300042_story.html