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Research Article

Making of a border island: The example of Lesvos

Paraskevi Tsitsaraki [1],* & Electra Petracou [1]

[1] University of the Aegean, Greece

* Correspondence: geod17007@geo.aegean.gr

Abstract: This article examines the gradual transformation of the island of Lesvos from a boundary into a border place, where migration management and border policies are pursued with the aim of controlling human mobility. Refugees have been arriving on Lesvos since 2000. This period coincided with the establishment of a common external border under the Schengen Agreement and the attempts to adopt a common asylum policy within the EU. Therefore, in this study we examine the impact of the implementation of certain border management measures on Lesvos, which have resulted in Lesvos being an example of a border that is not a line but an island (Mountz, 2014, 2020). Furthermore, the adoption of various asylum policies has led to the restriction of population mobility and the detention of people, justifying the policy and practice of abolishing asylum protection in the EU. In writing this article, we have drawn on a review of literature, reports from international organisations, legislation, relevant coverage of events in the international and local press, and participant observations.

Keywords: border island, control migration policies, Lesvos

Highlights:

- EU common asylum policies and external borders.
- Lesvos as a border island.
- Abandonment of refugee protection rights.

1. Introduction

Immigration to the EU Member States has been one of the main topics in public debates at national and European level over the last 20 years. However, these debates do not only relate to immigration itself, but also show how Member States view their cooperation and the construction of a common territory. In the EU, the main migration and refugee policies have led to the construction of walls and detention camps, the restriction of refugees' rights and the marginalisation of refugee populations. Islands have played a key role in the development of border policies that shape entry and exclude migration and refugee mobility (Mountz, 2020).

We focus on the Greek island of Lesvos in the north-eastern Aegean Sea, which has been gradually transformed into a border town since 2000. As Trubeta (2012) argues, Lesvos fits into the global political geography that is being reformed through the creation of new surveillance zones of human mobility. Lesvos is a border island, an 'interstitial space' where human mobility is limited and regulated, and at the same time a space that is part of the death of asylum' (Mountz, 2020). After the introduction of the harmonisation of asylum policies in the EU (Common European Asylum System) and the adoption of the Schengen Agreement, Greece became an external border of the EU and a first country of asylum.

In this article we explore the ways in which the implementation of integrated management of external borders has transformed Lesvos into a border island. We examine how EU and Greek border policies and practices and their implementation are gradually turning the island into a border place. Furthermore, we examine how these policies act as a deterrent and enforce the abolition of asylum protection.

2. Border Discourses.

The concept of border is fundamental in spatial discourse (Ventura et al, 2017) and plays a crucial role in the construction of political relations and entities. It is important to note that 'sovereign state's loci of bordering practices can no longer be confined to the lines of a political map' (Johnson and Jones, 2011, p. 61). According to Soja (2005), we live in a dense web of borders and boundaries, most of which lie outside our field of vision and consciousness and some of which carry the hard and invasive power of the state. Moreover, as Balibar (1998) argues, borders are everywhere.

The study of b/ordering is of decisive importance in understanding how social spatial organization is constructed and transformed (van Houtum, 2010). In addition, borders represent at the same time 'an appeal to the limits in politics and of political community, and a technology of limits', specifically a means of defining 'what is possible in the governing of life itself' (Amoore et al, 2008). Furthermore, borders can be imagined as lines of difference and protection. This interpretation connects them with representations of crossing them, signifying the de-fencing (van Houtum and van der Velde, 2004, in van Houtum et al, 2005). Gradually, borders became less material, we would rather call it an invisible transformation, as they change form through the implementation of more extensive and stricter controls (Schlette, 2016). Borders are performed and enacted as discursive or emotional landscapes of social power, and as well as technical landscapes of control and surveillance (Paasi, 2011).

2.1 B/Ordering Human Mobility.

Migration has never ceased to exist as a process of flow and mobility of populations in geographic space. According to Cuttitta (2015), the modern conception of international migration control is based on the 'non-territorial borders of citizenship' and the new migration policy is described by an increasingly strong distinction between different categories of foreign citizens. Agier (2016) characterizes borders as places, situations, but also moments of ritual in relation to the 'other' that can span time and space. And although borders have recently become 'hard', this 'hardening' does not mean a complete closure, but rather an attempt to control all cross-border movements by directing them to appropriate checkpoints (Medzini and Lev Ari, 2018)

Border control means enabling or prohibiting mobility for different groups of people. A 'regime of immobility ' has been established, increasing surveillance and control of migrants, refugees, the poor, etc. (Turner, 2007). Moreover, according to Tazzioli (2020), human mobility is a 'political technology' (Foucault, 2012) of migration control, implemented by keeping migrants on the move, directly or indirectly, by interrupting their autonomous mobility and forcing them to move to tangled geographies. Therefore, people are forced to stay, move, or reside in certain places for an (in)determined amount of time (Bauman, in Caletrio, 2017). In other words, mobility is a form of constraint that interrupts and disrupts geography and autonomous movements. It is all these obstacles, slowdowns, and restrictions that arise in the geography of immigrants, apart from detention and spatial restriction. We might therefore describe border areas as places where human rights are suspended for certain categories of people, while at the same time their bodies exist only insofar as they can be excluded at any time by border practices (Topak, 2014).

People in these border zones of waiting and uncertainty are forced to live constrained lives between 'here' and 'there' and therefore create 'moments' in which their social identity is challenged. As Cuttitta (2014) argues, migration routes, practices, and control policies are changing, and 'territorial borders have changed profoundly in terms of their form, their operational modalities, and the places where they manifest themselves'. In these places, the 'prisoners' experience 'bare life' (Agamben, 2005), living there 'for some time (shorter or longer) under a "status of exclusion".

2.2 European Union Border Management.

Since the late 1990s, a common asylum system and common external borders have been established within the EU and the Schengen area, leading to common policies and the establishment of European organizations such as Frontex and EASO. The geopolitical outcome of the EU's 'new b/ordering policy' is a bifurcated immigration policy, with a choice between desirable and undesirable immigrants. The EU looks like a gated community where biopolitical control and migration management are largely products of fear. This fear is increasingly associated with the entry of the immigrant, the stranger, and the fear of losing social identity (self-identification) (van Houtum, 2008). 'Europe' has become a 'borderland' (Balibar, 2009) where 'militarized instruments of exclusion and oppression' (Carr, 2015, in Marino, 2016) are used, commonly considered the most effective forms of prevention against 'external threats'. Moreover, the 'new' European borders, especially the external borders of the Union, are as hard as their internal predecessors and have indeed become rather 'sharp' markers of difference (Scott and van Houtum, 2009, in Johnson and Jones, 2011).

This 'humanity on the move' is now under the control of the EU's military borders while trapped in reception and internment camps (Marino, 2016). As a result, 'flexible, mobile, and multiform borders' emerge in reception camps, in ships and planes patrolling neighboring waters, and in the physical presence of officials (Cuttitta, 2014). The detention of displaced persons functions as one tool in a broader policy aimed at preventing future migrations (Loyd and Mountz, 2014). Spatial control of border places has become a commonplace practice, and the establishment of camps is a form of gathering and confining these people to facilitate their management and daily biopolitical control (van Houtum, 2010).

Detention centres mark a temporary topography of stations along the various migration routes. According to Iliadou (2012), the camps are usually located far from people and cities, what Foucault would call 'heterotopias'. Moreover, the refugee camp is embedded in the larger field of mobility control and a politics of citizenship in which camps are seen as a central means of producing 'differentiated modalities of mobilities' (Andrijasevic, 2010, see also Panagiotidis, Tsianos, 2007, in Hess and Kasparek, 2019).

According to Green (2012), borders 'act as ideological fortresses against human movement and difference. As Iliadou (2019) notes, EU policymakers and managers are using the so-called 'refugee crisis' to justify and legitimize a series of emergency measures-a 'state of emergency' (Agamben, 2005)-in the name of humanitarian aid against those who cross borders.

We can say that there is an interplay between surveillance and mobility, as a result of which the border becomes a place of surveillance where identities, mobilities, and narratives are controlled by border politics (Amoore et al, 2008). In recent years, border zones have multiplied across Europe as places of containment, control, protracted stranding, and violence, as Tazzioli mentions (2020).

As Hess and Kasparek (2019) mention, the temporary collapse of the EU' migration and border regime in 2015 and its reconstruction not only triggered a human rights crisis in Europe, but also led to questionable political mechanisms that could be called a 'state of exception'. This border regime, the result of an ongoing effort, is characterized by moments of 'crisis' in which stability is temporary and can never be taken for granted (Hess and Kasparek, 2019).

3. Border and the Technique of Geographical Restriction.

In Lesvos, the policies and practices that are implemented make this border place into a transitional space where mobility control and limitation are exercised. This transition is not only due to the increase in arrivals, but also to the changes in the actors involved and the policy responses at the European and national levels (Bousiou, 2020). When numbers peaked during the 2015 'summer of migration, EU leaders feared that these arrivals posed an existential threat to the EU itself. At the same time, EU member states were unable to formulate a common asylum policy, raising doubts about the effectiveness of EU institutions and leadership (Ries and Culbertson, 2018). In response to the massive flows of people, the doctrine of the 'highly contested wall' emerged, leading to the construction of several walls along the route (between Hungary and Croatia, Slovenia and Croatia, North Macedonia and Greece), and Austria and Slovenia. Some countries along the route responded by occasionally closing their own borders (Oruc et al, 2020). In addition, we note that the EU-Turkey declaration and the closure of the so-called Western Balkans route in spring 2016 restricted uncontrolled refugee movements within the EU (Arvanitidis et al, 2021). This situation has had a profound impact on the situation of refugees 'in Greece and significant implications for the rights, reception conditions, living standards and protection framework faced by new arrivals (Petracou et al, 2018).

The EU-Turkey Declaration also affected the social, political, and legal space in Europe, and the response of the European Union and its member states to it was heterogeneous and fragmented (Hess and Kasparek, 2019). Moreover, the EU-Turkey Declaration pursued several goals (Terry 2021), including reducing pressure on European borders, deterring future asylum seekers, and sending a signal (both externally and within the bloc) that EU member states can stand united on issues that "threaten" the Union.

Under these circumstances, Greece and especially the islands - including Lesvos - were asked to manage a refugee population that no longer considered Greece a transit country, but was trapped there for an unknown period of time due to the adopted EU policy. The forced stay of these refugee groups on the island contributed to the transformation of the island into a confined space, as since 2016 refugees and immigrants could no longer 'disperse in space or get lost in it' as in the past (Papataxiarchis, 2017).

The 2015 emergency led to the introduction of a hotspot approach to provide operational solutions. The hotspot facilities became closed reception centers after the launch of the EU-Turkey declaration. As a result, people who arrived in the Aegean islands after March 20, 2016, were detained in the hotspot premises to be returned to Turkey if they did not apply for international protection or their applications were rejected. Nevertheless, the practice of blanket detention was largely abandoned as of late 2016 and replaced by a practice of systematic geographic restriction (AIDA, 2022). Moreover, the EU-Turkey Declaration contributed significantly to blocking refugee movements to Greece and turning the Aegean Sea into a 'containment belt' for migrants (Garelli and Tazzioli, 2016). As a result, Greek islands have been transformed into de facto detention centers (Amnesty International, 2017).

At the same time, patrols were increased by NATO and European vessels attempting to intercept boats carrying refugees. All entrances and exits to the island were controlled, resulting in thousands of people remaining trapped inside the island, and control was extended to the interior of the island. This geographic restriction turned the island into a prison without a fence. Now 'the prison is not only in Moria camp, but everywhere on the island,' as Iliadou explained (Iliadou, 2019). Lesvos functions as a stopover, a temporary but last resort, and a place where people are held against their will and in violation of their rights. According to a report by Spiegel online (February 5, 2020), more than 42,000 refugees and migrants were (and still are) stuck on the

As Iliadou (2019) describes, the interior of the island changed its shape, became a huge prison, an important exit gate. The city port is no longer the same, it now has the appearance of a large cage, due to the high fences that surround it and the frequent presence of the police that guard it. Also in recent years, the port area has had to be transformed several times into an informal camp, due to the shortage of reception facilities on the island. Recently, an extraordinary law was issued (Government Gazette A'45 2.3.2020), postponing new asylum applications for a month and arbitrarily detaining new arrivals from the sea in the port (Amnesty International, 2020). At the same time, we note that the geographical confinement of these people sometimes extends into maritime space when ships are converted into reception and registration centers. This is a common practice in recent years, using passenger ships (e.g., the Rhodes ferry) and warships to house, but at the same time control and restrict, these people on the island. As typically reported in the local press (Lesvos News, March 5, 2020), all entrances and exits to the port were closed and guarded, while citizens and members of non-governmental organizations were prohibited from approaching the area. In fact, the Rhodes ferry docked at a point in the port that could not be seen from the road. Moreover, according to Amnesty International (2020), as of March 5, 2020, the new arrivals are being detained in various areas of Lesvos, such as the beaches of Skala Sykamnia, Korakas and Eftalou, without identification documents and mostly in exceptionally poor conditions.

From this point on, Lesvos, which was initially in an emergency situation in 2015, was led into a situation that has become an intolerable long-term problem (Cederquist, 2019). Also, a study by Papadopoulos and Fratsea (2019) mentions that the informal national policy of 'deterrence' aimed at discouraging immigrants and refugees from crossing the border has territorialized immigration policies and created special detention zones in the Aegean islands. The geographical restriction to the five Aegean islands was introduced by an administrative decision of the Greek asylum authority. The declaration between the EU and Turkey had significant implications for Greece and the islands, such as the introduction of separate asylum procedures and crucial changes to the national legal framework. In addition, with the recent Law 4375/2016 and the EU-Turkey Declaration, procedures must begin to determine the status of people who have arrived on the islands, even if they did not intend to stay in Greece (Leivaditi et al, 2020).

4. Lesvos as an Example of a Border Island.

In recent decades, more precisely from 2000 until today, Lesvos has been in the global, regional and national spotlight due to refugee arrivals and border protection policies. In fact, all islands along the Greek-Turkish border in the Northeast and East Aegean are points of entry into the EU. The island of Lesvos is the third largest island in Greece (in terms of size) with 1,636 square kilometers and a coastline of 371 miles. The capital is Mytilene and it lies on the eastern border of Greece and the European Union with Turkey.

States have been using the islands for years as an experimental field to exert their control and influence. On the islands, asylum seekers find themselves in a state of spatial, temporal and legal limbo for long periods of time, combined with deplorable living conditions (Mountz, 2020). We can argue that the island of Lesvos has become a border place, where control measures are implemented aimed at limiting and directing human mobility. Lesvos has become, among other things, a militarised outpost, a border place of where human mobility is controlled. As Trubeta (2012) notes, human mobility control measures have created new human mobility surveillance zones in the Aegean (see Figure 1, which illustrates human mobility control in the form of a map).

Cavallo and Matteo (2020) describe the term 'borderscape' as a fluid and shifting space that is simultaneously traversed continuously by a range of bodies, discourses, practices, and relations. Furthermore, Tsavdaroglou et al. (2019) argue that solidarity movements and actions are developing on Lesvos, contributing to the destabilization of the border regime while strict border measures and controls are implemented.

Moreover, the development and implementation of the EUs common border policies and practices on Lesvos over the past 20 years exemplify the prevailing goal of abolishing the refugee protection system on EU territory and, as Mountz (2020) argues, the death of asylum.

Moreover, for decades the Greek state has pursued a formal policy that could be called 'the prevailing policy of invisibility' towards refugees, arguing that Greece is a transit country for refugees. This policy was manifested in a low rate of refugee status granting in Greece, in the reception infrastructure, and in obstacles, delays, and rights violations during the asylum process (Rozakou, 2012). The 'political technique of invisibility' seems to have been prevalent for some time on the island of Lesvos, as for a large part of the local community the problem of detention of a small number of people was not visible. The arrival of displaced people has led to an overcrowding of detention centers and the reactions of humanitarian organizations have brought this problem to the forefront. The visibility of the phenomenon began when the informal spaces of 'hospitality' spread to the areas of the city where the parks, the port and other places were filled with people.

Figure 1. Detention camps of Lesvos (created by Nikolaos Karamanos).

Increased security measures at land borders have led to more refugees and migrants taking the informal sea route to the Greek islands. In 2003, the first Detention Centre on Lesvos became operational, which was the 'first station for refugees on European territory on Lesvos' (Trubeta, 2012). This center was located in an old warehouse in the village of Pagani, 2 km outside the city of Mytilene. During the period from 2003 to 2009, it served as a detention center without the basic infrastructure for housing people, resulting in hundreds of people (men, pregnant women, children, disabled and elderly people) being detained in unacceptable living conditions. In June 2008, the situation in Pagani worsened, leading to a series of local and international protests in late August 2009. At that time, the No Border Camp in Mytilene was organized by various collectives, a 'pan-European movement' (Maravas, 2011) that worked together for the rights of migrants and asylum seekers. The Pagani detention center became a symbol of inhumane detention, a 'Guantanamo in the Aegean' (Migreurop Network, 2013). In 2009, a victory was recorded for human and refugee rights when this detention center was finally closed. It can be said that the Pagani camp in the border region of Lesvos was run 'experimentally'. A policy of deterrence and restraint towards the displaced population was followed, but the main aim was to determine the reactions triggered by the existence of the camp in the local society and among the refugees.

In the period between 2012 and 2016, Lesvos lacked structures for the reception of asylum seekers, which resulted in these people being housed in public places such as parks, the port, etc. in Mytilene. Under these conditions, the initial reception center was established under Law 3907/2011, as provided for in PD. 102/2012 (Government Gazette A'169/03-09-2013); see also Law 4172/2013 (Government Gazette A'/167/23-07-2013), Article 110 (Annual Report, 2013). During this period, the new detention center on the island was located in the old military facilities near the village of Moria on Lesvos. The initial reception center in Moria was established by ministerial decision (4.2/2624/15.5.2014, FEK B'1373/29.5.2014). Although the construction of the center was completed, it was operated as a mobile facility in mid-2014 due to staff shortages and administrative problems. According to Welcome 2 Lesvos (2014), the reports of humanitarian organizations and the local press, it was a 'detention camp to which only a few selected NGOs have access, on condition that they do not disclose any information to the outside world', while Migreurop Network (2013) states that 'it is de facto an internment camp surrounded by fences and barbed wire'. According to Franck (2018), who visited the area in 2016, the Moria camp "resembled a kind of high-security prison with high walls and several layers of barbed wire

According to Hess and Kasparek (2019), the period of 2015 is referred to as the Summer of Migration' because a humanitarian crisis led to severe repercussions that are still felt today. After 2015, migration law was rewritten 'in the interstices, gray areas, and undefined jurisdictions of the ad hoc architectures of European borderlands. During this period, Greece and especially the Aegean islands experienced a massive influx of refugees.

In response to the refugee influx in the summer of 2015, the European Union decided to establish 'hotspots' in Greece and Italy (Eule et al, 2018). Across Europe, post-2015 refugee control and immobilization depended on camp-like infrastructures. Also, the 'hotspots' introduced by the European Commission in the European Agenda for Migration were implemented in Greece through the legal framework for the reception and identification procedure under Law 4375/2016 (AIDA, 2016).

We can argue that in 2005, a new function of the European Unions initial reception camps on the Greek islands emerged, setting the direction for prolonged detention, spatial segregation, and a 'regime of differential detention'. With the emerging border and migration regime in 2015, we need to examine a new function of European refugee camps that points towards a rational of prolonged confinement and spatial segregation. In February 2016, the first hotspot in Greece opened in Moria. According to Bousiou (2020), the hotspot approach was already part of the European Commission's agenda on migration. Moreover, within the camp, all relevant EU agencies (EASO, FRONTEX, EUROPOL, and EUROJUST) would work on the ground with Member States to identify, register, and fingerprint arriving migrants. The hotspot centers on the Greek islands, and in particular Moria on Lesvos, are an example of new infrastructures that blur the functional lines of reception, accommodation, detention, and confinement of liberty (Hess and Kasparek, 2019). According to FRA (2016), living conditions within the hotspot were described as inadequate due to a lack of water, electricity, and hygiene facilities, leading to increased risks to the health of the population in general.

As outlined in the Special Report of the European Court of Auditors (2017), a new immigration policy was adopted regarding the initial reception of persons crossing the border without authorization, and one of the main operational measures proposed was the implementation of this new policy based on 'hotspots'. More specifically, the term 'hotspot' refers to an area at the EU's external borders that is subject to disproportionate migratory pressure. The Reception and Identification Center (R.I.C.) of Lesvos, located in the village of Moria, became the first official hotspot in Greece, where arriving refugees and immigrants were registered, thoroughly checked, and fingerprinted with the help of Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), and Europol (E.S.I., 2017). As Tazzioli (in Eule et al, 2018) notes, the hotspot system introduces new configurations of mobility control at the EU's external borders, while the hotspots act as preventive barriers regulating access to the asylum system. Xypolytas (2019) describes the Moria hotspot as a 'system' that aims to limit and regulate the mobility of people from European territory. The Moria hotspot functioned beyond its capacity for many years while being condemned by international and national organizations and NGOs. As Franck (2018) describes, the Moria camp resembled a kind of high-security prison with high walls and several layers of barbed wire fencing, housing thousands of refugees. According to the Greek Refugee Council (2019), thousands of refugees and migrants lived in and around the hotspot enclosed in tents in olive groves in the so-called 'jungle' in 'dangerous, inhumane and degrading' conditions. Moreover, it is important to note that the conflation of reception and registration within the hotspot approach blurred the lines between control and protection and led to a situation where international protection was made dependent on control and registration (Bousiou, 2020). The new government had promised 'solutions' and relief for the islands in the Aegean, but in February 2020 this was nothing more than the enforcement of the 'closed centers' policy on the islands.

Many national and international media outlets, as well as the asylum seekers and refugees themselves, referred to the Moria hotspot as a 'hell' and 'a "disgrace to Europe,' where tensions and riots were frequent during the eight years of its existence. Clashes between the different groups were a frequent phenomenon, while protests against the deplorable conditions and overcrowding led to fires breaking out several times, destroying parts of the camp and, above all, costing lives. The situation was further worsened by the sealing off of Covid 19, which essentially cut off all residents of the camp from any protection. According to Tsavdaroglou and Kaika (2022), hyper-isolation in Greek state-run refugee camps during the COVID -19 pandemic increased physical and social borders for refugees and increased their stigmatization and marginalization.

The hotspot of Moria was destroyed by successive fires between 8 and 19 September 2020. As Markham (2022) describes, everyone, refugees, locals, volunteers, and politicians, wanted Moria to close. After the Moria fire, thousands of refugees remained on the streets for more than a week without medical care or livelihoods and were harassed by the police (Amnesty International, 2020). A solution for housing these people was provided by a 'temporary' structure/camp located in the Mavrovouni area of Kara Tepe (used by the military as a firing range), but most people refer to the place simply as 'New Moria'. According to UNHCR (2020) and other humanitarian organizations, this new facility near the town of Mytilene is plagued with significant problems, as parts of the site are prone to flooding and the shelters, which consist of tents, are not adequately equipped to provide the necessary protection from weather phenomena and low temperatures. In addition, criticism of the inadequacy of the Mavrovouni 'temporary' camp remains vibrant due to extreme weather conditions, inaccessible and inadequate sanitation facilities, and security incidents that occur despite extensive police monitoring. In addition, Human Rights Watch (February 17, 2021) noted that the Greek government downplays the risk of lead poisoning at the Mavrovouni 'temporary' camp in Kara Tepe because young children and pregnant women are at risk from possible soil contamination.

In 2019, the new Greek government of the right-wing 'New Democracy' party (ND) declared that it would demolish the Moria camp and build new EUfunded control, security and closed structures. In addition, the migration minister stated that arrivals should be screened more carefully to deter terrorists (Markham, 2022). Furthermore, the government announced that future migration plans would refer to stricter measures at Greek borders and the transformation of camps into closed centers (Leivaditi et al, 2020). The new ministry promised that the new camps would have better sanitation and amenities such as stores, ATMs, and recreational facilities. However, the new 'Closed Controlled Access Centers' emphasized security. As Markham (2022) mentions, human rights activists said that these new camps were simply to store refugees on the islands, keep them away from support centers, and hide them from the public. The location of the new refugee camp on Lesvos, with a capacity of 5,000 people and accessed by a long, unpaved and winding road that winds through dry forest land, is far from the town of Mytilene and near a garbage dump that is vulnerable to forest fires. According to Andersen and Geiger (2022), this choice conveys a message that is anything but subtle: 'Out of sight, out of mind'.

As the report of the Greek Refugee Council and Oxfam (2022) makes clear, the establishment of the new camp points the way from the 'jungle' of Moria to the new concept of 'prison' camp. The Hellenic Police and a private security company will guard the new closed and controlled facility or camp. It will also have two layers of barbed wire and additional internal fences between the different areas.

The new camp, named Lesvos Closed Controlled Access Center (CCC) with a capacity of 5,000 people, will be located in an area called Vastria, 30 km from the town of Mytilene, in the middle of a pine forest with the obvious risk of forest fire. According to Jahre et al. (2018), the locations where the detention centres are to be built have been chosen to isolate refugees from the local community. These new camps are built in remote areas far from local communities, with an average distance of 14 kilometers to the nearest towns and no access to regular, adequate, and affordable transportation. With its barbed wire fences, this camp resembles complexes that run counter to the basic principles of European policy, such as those contained in the EU Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion. One could say that this camp acts like a prison that relies on deterrence, isolation and containment (eu.rescue.org, 2022).

One could argue that there is continuity between the hotspots and the controlled centers. In these centers, asylum procedures take months or even years, resulting in asylum seekers, including children, being held in the controlled centers for very long periods of time (Close, 2022). In addition, the Greek government appears to be focused on preventing 'primary flows' and the new camps are said to play an increasing role in

detaining people awaiting deportation. The Greek government relies on a new monitoring system to solidify its control over the camps (Schauseil, 2021).

Table 1. The camps in the island of Lesvos.

Camps in Lesvos	Time period	Location	Capacity
Pagani	2003 to 2009	Located in area Pagani 2 km, outside the city of Mytilene	The camp's capacity was 300 seats and it ended up housing 1200 people
Moria	2013 to September 2020	Located very close to the village of Moria and 7,5 km from the city of Mytilene.	Frstly, designed for 800 seats, in 2017 it was expanded to 3000 and it had been housing more than 20,000 people
Kara Tepe (municipal camp)	2015- April 2021	Located very close to the city of Mytilene	Capacity was 1300 people (vulnerable groups)
'temporary' camp Mavrovouni of Kara Tepe	2020- until today	2,5 kilometers north of the city of Mytilene	It has a capacity of 8,000 seats
Vastria /Lesvos Closed Controlled Access Center (CCAC)	under Construction	Locate in remote areas far from local communities/ distance from the closest towns is 14 km/	The initial capacity of the structure will be 5,000 but there are plans to add PROKEKA and automatically increase the capacity by several thousand

All the above with the closure of the PIKPA Open Hospitality Centre of Mytilene and the site of Kara Tepe (run by the Municipality of Mytilene) which was offering decent living conditions, prove that the Greek government has adopted policies of deterrence.

Recently, the Greek government is trying to keep the number of arrivals low in the islands implementing intensified controls at sea and pushbacks. After the fire of Moria (September 2020) the Greek government moved thousands of refugees from eastern Aegean islands to the mainland.

According to UNHCR data, the number of migrants and refugees sea arrivals on the Greek Islands was 9,714 in 2020 and 4,331 in 2021. Meanwhile, the Greek government (January 27, 2022) announced that the number of migrants and refugees living on the Greek Islands was 79% lower in December 2021 compared to 2020. However, the Swiss newspaper NZZ publicized that the number of migrants registered as arriving in 2021 by the Greek government did not match the number of people rescued by the Greek coast guard (Info migrants, 2022/01/31).

Since 2020, there has been a massive escalation of border violence in Greece. Especially in the sea, borders of Aegean have recorded many incidents of pushbacks. Topak (2020) describes the pushback practices and surveillance on the Greece-Turkey borderzones, placing emphasis on the spatial and territorial nature of biopolitical borders. According to the Human Rights Watch, in March and April 2020, there were victims and witnesses who described incidents in which the Greek police, the Greek Coast Guard, and unidentified men in black uniforms, who appeared to be working in close coordination with uniformed authorities, violently pushed migrants back to Turkey. The use of 'pushbacks' has increased since March 2020 (the Guardian, Sep 27, 2020). In addition, the Greek government has taken measures to reduce arrivals of refugees, such as temporarily delaying the right to asylum extending fences, along the land border with Turkey and had the idea to install floating barriers at sea. In recent years, arrivals have significantly decreased while, sadly, at the same time the numbers of people, who lose their lives attempting to reach Greece, have increased. The Aegean Boat Report reveals that 1,624 boats carrying 43,476 people were pushed back from the Greek islands into Turkish waters between 1 January 2017 and 27 September 2022 (European Council of Refugees and Exiles, 2022). The European Court of Human Rights issued a historic ruling on July 7 2022 concerning Greece's illegal and threatening practice of pushbacks of asylum seekers back to Turkey (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

5.   Conclusion.

This study looks at how the island of Lesvos is becoming a border place where enforcement measures are being carried out to control the mobility of people and abolish the right to asylum in the EU area. Lesvos has been hosting refugees since 2000 and has been in the global, regional and national spotlight since 2015 due to the massive arrivals and the attention they have received through reception policies and border management. The measures chosen have resulted in people's mobility being trapped in reception centres. The practice of confining refugees to camps facilitates the management of arrivals within border locations. It can be said that all camps that have operated and continue to operate on the island of Lesvos have followed a policy of deterrence and restraint towards displaced people. The adoption of the hotspot approach under the European Commission's migration agenda has led to a justification for prolonged border and spatial segregation. Moreover, these camps act as preventive barriers regulating access to the asylum system. In 2019, the Greek government of the right-wing New Democracy party, in cooperation with the EU, announced the construction of new closed centres with controlled access on the Greek islands. These closed centres ("prison-like")

are already in operation on Samos, Leros and Kos, but on Lesvos they are due to start operating in 2023 and will be located in a remote forest area to secure the asylum system. There has also been a massive increase in violence at Greeces borders. Especially at the maritime borders of the Aegean Sea, numerous incidents of pushbacks have been registered. All these are also counter-incentives for refugees to come and stop asylum in the EU.

EU initiatives and the first attempts to design and develop a common asylum policy within the EU have, since the turn of the 21st century, combined with national policies to protect the EUs common external borders, created specific conditions for people and places located at the external borders of the EU and the Schengen area. Whereas previously we could argue that boundaries were single lines and crossing them meant movement, with the adoption of the Schengen area and common policies for border management, we see whole countries such as Greece becoming buffer zones, while all islands such as Lesvos become borders. We plan to expand our research on the representations of the inhabitants of Lesvos, on policies and practices of migration and border management.

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