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**BORDERS AS MEETING POINTS:  
NEOLIBERALISM, SECURITISATION  
AND MIGRANTS' AUTONOMY IN THE  
PORT/BORDER AREA OF PATRAS**

MARCO MOGIANI

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Department of Development Studies  
SOAS, University of London

*A papà*

## Abstract

The resurgence in border studies over the last 20 years has generated a passionate and animated debate among scholars attempting to conceptualise how borders originate, where they are located, and what their implications are for the mobilities crossing them. Whether privileging structural over agential forces, horizontal connections over power relations, social networks over dichotomous struggles, each of the various epistemological approaches employed for the study of borders provides a particular point of view and captures specific processes or relations, yet omitting, overlooking, or failing to explain others. However, the boundaries between such approaches appear more blurred and indistinct than what they actually claim or pretend to be from the outside, leaving some room for theoretical dialogue.

By looking at the border *from* the border, the research aims not only to theoretically reconcile the different epistemological positions, but also to empirically grasp the multiplicity and complexity of social processes intersecting across borders. Critically drawing from the contrasting epistemological standpoints of Harvey, Lefebvre, and Massey, the research will adopt a different gaze to look at/from the border, in order to provide a more situated and nuanced analysis of borders, remaining attentive to the political-economic framework under which they unfold. Built around a space-time-everyday prism, this renovated gaze allows to grasp, I contend, the structural and agential forces underlying borders, as well as the multiple and grounded interconnections, networks, and conflicts between and within them. The research will eventually argue that borders can be better conceived as “meeting points”, where the various theories and practices of borders come to the fore and are reassessed on the ground.

The case study is the port/border area of Patras (Greece), conceptualised as a point of encounter and clash between intertwining and sometimes conflictual processes: neoliberalism, securitisation, and migrants’ autonomy. In Patras, neoliberalism has tended to demolish borders and guarantee the unbounded circulation of capital, goods, and people through the development of a multimodal logistical network, generating uneven and conflictual outcomes. Security measures and border controls have operated to safeguard such logistical network, erecting visible and less visible barriers to restrict access to potential threats. In line with the development of a common market, controversial migration and asylum policies have progressively limited the

legal entrance and permanence of migrants, creating an exploitable reserve army of undocumented labour force while favouring its circulation at European level. Although with internal contradictions and conflicts, migrant mobilities have continuously disrupted and defied the dominant spaces and times of capitalism and security, creating alternative places of refuge and transit in abandoned industrial complexes in the proximity of the new port. Far from being predetermined and homogeneous, these processes have constantly negotiated their presence on the ground, generating socio-spatial connections, contestations, and struggles. The port/border area of Patras, I argue, emerges as a privileged “meeting point” from which to examine in a nuanced and situated manner how the manifold and complex social processes unfold and intersect across borders, drawing multifarious and at times contrasting spatio-temporal patterns.

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## List of abbreviations

AIDA	Asylum Information Database
AoM	Autonomy of Migration
AU	Asylum Unit
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CF	Cohesion Fund
EC	European Commission
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EEC	European Economic Community
EIB	European Investment Bank
EMHRN	Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
EURODAC	European Dactylographic System
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
FRONTEX	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the EU
GUP	General Urban Plan
HCG	Hellenic Coast Guard
HP	Hellenic Police
HRC	Hellenic Red Cross
INEA	Innovation and Networks Executive Agency
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISPS	International Ship and Port Facility Security
MMM	Ministry of Mercantile Marine
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
OEM	Orient/East-Med Corridor
OLPa	Port Authority of Patras
OSE	Hellenic Railway Organisation
PATHE	Patras-Athens-Thessaloniki-Evzoni
PFSA	Port Facility Security Assessment
PFSP	Port Facility Security Plan
PFSM	Port Facility Security Manager
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RAO	Regional Asylum Office
RO/RO-PAX	Roll-on/Roll-off and Passengers
RP	Regulatory Plan
RTP	Regional Territorial Plan
SF	Structural Fund
SSP	Special Spatial Plan
TEN-T	Trans-European Network for Transport
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

# 1 Introduction

The only way we can look out into space, then, is to look back in time. We can never know what the universe is like now. We only know what it was like then. When we look up at a star that is thousands of light-years away, we are really traveling thousands of years back in the history of space.

Jostein Gaarder 1991, *Sophie's World*.

## 1.1 The port/border area of Patras

In the port/border area of Patras, Greece's third most important city and harbour, events seem to unfold in the same way time and again, as if part of an unceasing routine. Every afternoon ferryboats return from their journeys across the Adriatic Sea, operating in the framework of bilateral shipping connections between Greece and Italy that have endured for almost 60 years. Lorries, cars, and passengers orderly disembark from their bellies, only to quickly disperse and disappear after few minutes. Meanwhile, hundreds of other vehicles gradually approach the area of the new port, a state-of-the-art construction inaugurated in 2011 in the southern periphery of the city, which contrasts with the state of neglect of the surrounding neighbourhood. In a matter of seconds, they dispatch the security checks and rest inside the restricted area, waiting to board the ferryboats that will take them to Italy.

Several police and port police officers are at work to guarantee the safety and smoothness of port operations, preventing threats from entering the port area and disrupting the daily procedures. Their cars and motorbikes incessantly patrol the check-in area, the adjacent parking lot, and the surrounding roads, activating the sirens to signal and scare off undesirable people. Going back and forth with their scooters, private security members of the Port Authority of Patras (OLPa) provide their contribution, monitoring the 1.5-kilometre-long external fence and rejecting migrants' attempts to enter the area.

Gathering around the premises of nearby abandoned factories, in fact, dozens of migrants constantly endeavour to run towards the parking lots inside the port fences and sneak under those lorries that will bring them to another Europe. Trapped in a country wrecked from a devastating economic crisis, migrants attempt to eschew the perverse mechanisms of the European asylum procedures, which would force them to remain in Greece with scarce possibilities to work or integrate in its society. Their everyday struggle against border guards epitomises their strong willingness to

reconnect with their friends and family in other countries, or simply to reach other European destinations where they can finally start a new life.

The microcosm of the port/border area of Patras reflects a variety of intertwining processes and dynamics that originated further away in space and back in time, tracing imperceptible connections with a multiplicity of other cities, events, and people (see Massey 1994, 2005). An invisible thread connects several places and times before appearing clearly in Patras: the heart of the distribution and logistics companies linking Greece with the rest of Europe; the European ministerial offices and national parliamentary assemblies where migration policies have been ideated, discussed and ratified; the USA where the security dispositions for port facilities have been initially approved and later adopted worldwide; the remote villages of Afghanistan and Sudan, where the decision to migrate has taken place.

As these processes intersect in the port/border area of Patras, they acquire their vivid materiality, producing their spatio-temporal significance, negotiating their presence, and reshaping their relations on the ground, not without superimpositions and conflicts. In its attempt to accelerate space-time connections between production and consumption sites, capital has crafted the architecture of the port and of the arterial connections surrounding it, although with uneven and contrasting outcomes. The rigid impositions of just-in-time logistics processes regulate the continuous flow of lorries, which harmoniously overlaps with the occasional mobility of other vehicles and passengers organised through the timetable of the ferryboats. Security measures, with their assemblage of standardised procedures, dedicated personnel, and protected routes, operate for the safe execution of daily operations, which migrants constantly attempt to disrupt through their “practices of spatial disobedience” (Tazzioli 2017a).

The unfolding of such processes across the port/border of Patras, with their manifold interconnections, conflicts, and contradictions, eventually reverberates to the global and European level, engendering similar dynamics of differential in/exclusion. From Patras other threads depart imperceptibly and reach the Italian ports of entry, where other mechanisms of security are deployed to check lorries and spot the potential presence of migrants that, by virtue of the Dublin Regulation, will be deported back to Greece. Thereafter, these threads continue along the extensive road network that will guide those lorries through Italy and the rest of Europe, and towards the multiplicity of destinations where migrant journeys abruptly halt, temporarily pause, or eventually terminate.

Staring at the multiplicity of processes unfolding across the port/border area of Patras, one is naturally led to wonder, how to capture, understand and elaborate upon these dynamics? How can one, in other words, look simultaneously at the political-economic forces that shape the port/border area and at the grounded, everyday materiality of social processes that intermingle, negotiate and confront them?

The everyday circumstances occurring in the port/border area of Patras described in the previous section appear, at first sight, not so different from those unfolding in similar locations all across Europe, from the longstanding “jungles” in Calais and Sangatte (see Courau 2003; Rygiel 2011) to the more recent border stations of Como and Ventimiglia (see Tazzioli 2017a, 2018). This is so in three respects.

Under neoliberalism, first, ports epitomise key infrastructural nodes within the global supply chains, connecting loci of production and consumption at worldwide level and facilitating the unbounded circulation of capital, goods, and passengers (Heyman 2004; Cowen 2014). Drawing from Harvey (1981, 1985, 1999) and from other authors who revisited his analysis (see Jessop 2000, 2006; Graham and Marvin 2001; Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006), I refer to ports as “spatial fixes”, i.e. relatively stable and durable infrastructural configurations that promote and accelerate the mobility of capital, commodities, and labour, reducing the spatio-temporal barriers to capitalist development.

Second, as the progressive dismantlement of spatio-temporal barriers cannot occur without the operational securitisation of logistical hubs, their surrounding networks, and the bodies that traverse them (Cowen 2007, 2010; Mezzadra and Neilson 2015, 2017), ports have also become key sites of securitised border management. Ports and borders simultaneously condense economic and security imperatives (Nevins 2002; Coleman 2005), whereas logistics, “the art and science of organizing the turnover of capital to maximize efficiencies of transport, communication, linking, and distribution” (Mezzadra and Neilson 2015:2-3), emerges as the joining link between them. A complex assemblage of security mechanisms, procedures, and laws constantly guarantees the safe execution of logistical networks, regulating and filtering the variegated mobilities that make use of them, or tentatively do so.

Finally, ports and borders are transformed by the unpredictability and “turbulence” (Papastergiadis 2000) of migrant flows, which disrupt and defy the dominant spaces of capitalism and security, negotiating their temporary permanence

(which at times turns into a “permanent temporariness”, see Bailey et al. 2002) and producing alternative places of refuge and transit. Their “autonomous” (Mitropoulos 2006; Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Bojadžijev and Karakayali 2010; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013), i.e. disruptive and disorderly social force, replete with passionate impulses and rational calculations, inevitable choices and persistent determinations, dauntless actions and bold guesses, appears to eschew the structural forces of capitalism, emerging as a complex, multifaceted, and heterogeneous phenomenon that continuously excogitates new strategies for its survival and reproduction.

Yet, the specific ways in which logistics, securitisation, and the autonomous force of migration intertwine and overlap in Patras, as in any other place, cannot be analysed in isolation from each other, nor can they be assumed *a priori*. The particular configuration of the port/border area of Patras appears indeed the unique result of the complex interaction among these variegated dynamics through history and across space, so much so that adopting a single epistemological approach or a specific point of view would necessarily fail to capture or understand such a multifarious and heterogeneous reality.

Although not being located at the border between two nation states, its particular historical and current developments, combined with its geopolitical position, have made the city a distinctive laboratory for the implementation of bordering practices and the outbreak of border struggles. The Adriatic Sea, which Patras fronts onto, has represented a remarkable resource for the city, contributing since the ancient times to the economic development of both the city and the surrounding region, fostering the creation and growth of manufacturing, and subsequently evolving as an important junction for lorries and passengers’ traffic. That same sea, however, has obstructed other flows: the more recent logistical dynamics at global and European level, combined with the creation and reinforcement of a European border and migration regime, have turned Patras into a border post, hindering and delaying the movement of undesired people in ways that remain to be discovered. The historical and conjunctural situation of the port/border area of Patras, as well as peculiar threads unravelling there and from there spreading out again, in other words, make this border area, like every border, unique and incomparable (J. Anderson and O’Dowd 1999; Hall 2005).

This research starts from the empirical analysis of Patras' living materiality to grasp the variegated dynamics intersecting across its port/border area and, at the same time, critically assess the different epistemological approaches on borders. It does not aim at providing an empirical analysis of a specific border area through the employment of a predefined theoretical approach, nor does it simply look at the particular ways through which borders continuously change across space or time (see R. Jones and Johnson 2014).

Rather, as chapter 2 will show, it takes the border as a point of departure for a critical analysis of both the epistemological approaches on borders and the empirical process traversing them in their everyday materiality. A renovated gaze will be employed for this purpose, thus allowing to disclose how such dynamics unfold and intertwine on the ground, how they negotiate their presence through contrasts and conflicts, how they unwind from the above only to be reshaped and sometimes opposed from below. From the grounded and situated materiality of Patras, the research will eventually provide insights on the theoretical study of borders.

The research conceives Patras as a port/border area, a place of simultaneous encounter and clash of multi-scalar social processes that produce and craft border areas: neoliberalism, securitisation, and migrants' autonomy. By empirically investigating the multiplicity of processes intersecting across the border from the vantage point of the port/border area of Patras itself, the research:

- a) Empirically investigates the situated and intertwined dynamics that configure Patras as a unique node in the European logistics-security-migration nexus. The port/border area of Patras is a privileged site to examine how different social processes unfold and intermingle to produce and craft borders, to facilitate connections between people and places, to restrict unwanted mobilities, and to generate negotiations, contestations and struggles.
- b) Analytically interrogates various epistemological perspectives traditionally employed to analyse such nexus. The threads that unravel from the port/border area of Patras, in fact, do not merely entail empirical or phenomenological consequences, but also encourage a theoretical reflection over the conceptualisation of borders. The analysis of the complex articulations intersecting across the port/border area of Patras inspires a broader contemplation upon borders at large, the forces producing and governing them, the ways in which they manifest, and the differential outcomes they generate.

Borders are hence conceived as “meeting points” between multifarious social processes, with their dynamic interrelations, negotiations, and conflicts. They are also, in turn, a meeting point for various border theorisations, which can be set in conversation with each other.

The remainder of this chapter introduces the analytical perspectives deployed to gaze at Patras, accounts for the process of field research that provides the empirical base to sustain the argument, and eventually discloses the elaboration of the thesis.

## **1.2 Meeting points**

The advent of neoliberal globalisation has sparked a renewed interest in the study of borders (for general references, see Balibar 1998, 2002; Newman and Paasi 1998; Van Houtum 2000; Kolossov 2005; C. Johnson et al. 2011; Wilson and Donnan 2012a). Once dismissed the premature predictions of a borderless world (Ohmae 1990), academic attention has been directed to more complex understandings of borders and mobilities, capable of grasping the multifarious mechanisms through which borders proliferate throughout society and engender differential patterns of mobility among and within people, goods, capital, and services. Different and sometimes contrasting epistemological perspectives have been adopted in the attempt to explain how borders could be originated or conceived, where they could be found, and what implications they might have for the mobilities crossing them.

At a first glance, these perspectives, which will be analysed more in depth in chapter 2, appear irreconcilable and mutually exclusive, as they privilege contrasting analytical, methodological, and political standpoints. The employment of one particular perspective, with its advantages and drawbacks, has often resulted not only in the dismissal or disregard of the others, but also in the elaboration of new conceptual frameworks for capturing the changing roles, functions, and meanings of borders, which have nonetheless generated little advancements in terms of academic knowledge. Ensconcing themselves in their academic positions, border scholars have often engaged in tiring confrontations rather than seeking a fruitful dialogue (Novak 2017). Quite ironically, the process of bordering has penetrated well within the academia.

At a closer look, however, the boundaries between the different epistemological approaches appear more blurred and indistinct than what they actually claim or pretend to be from the outside, leaving some room for theoretical conversations. Whether

privileging the role of structural over agential forces, of horizontal interconnections over dichotomous struggles, of social networks over power relations, each epistemological approach provides a particular and significant point of view, which nonetheless remains partial and limited. In other words, some analyses of borders can better capture certain phenomena and analyse distinct sets of processes or relations occurring in specific places or at specific points in time. Yet, they always risk omitting or overlooking other aspects, thus failing to grasp or explain them. As Feyerabend argues in his essay against the dogmatism of scientific research, “*all methodologies, even the most obvious ones, have their limits*” (1993:23, his emphasis).

### *A different gaze*

A different gaze appears thus necessary to comprehend and evaluate the multiple processes unfolding across borders, with their ever-changing interrelations, contradictions, and conflicts. Several interchangeable lenses are required to attain a gaze capable of capturing and analysing the multi-scalar dynamics, relations, and outcomes that such processes activate in their unravelling over borders. Echoing Mezzadra (2011a:161) “How can we develop a methodology capable of grasping... the common characteristics of global capitalism while at the same time allowing us to remain sensitive to the specificity of local contexts and differences...?”

The works of Harvey, Lefebvre and Massey, although (or precisely because of) drawing from different epistemological standpoints, can hone the elaboration of such analytical gaze and provide fruitful insights for sharpening a nuanced analysis of borders and border theories. The different perspectives that the authors use to interpret the spatial, temporal, and everyday relations unfolding in the city are not only an illuminating example of their diverging approaches, but also a significant acknowledgment of the importance of grasping both the multi-scalar spatio-temporal processes and the intertwining social networks and relations unfolding in everyday life. The combined appropriation of these gazes, set in relation with the aforementioned epistemological approaches in border studies, can foster, I argue, a more complex and grounded view over borders, capable of capturing the structural and agential processes, and the complex interconnections and conflicts between and within them.

In his painstaking description of Baltimore, Harvey (2001) adopts a bird’s-eye view that allows him to reconstruct the historical evolution of the city, delineate its

political and economic development, and elucidate the peculiar characteristics of its main neighbourhoods. The view from Federal Hill, which gives the name to the chapter, provides a powerful exemplification of the capitalist domination over urban contexts, with its inexorable tendencies towards de-industrialisation, financialisation, and gentrification of public spaces. His analysis of the city's spatial changes through time enables an in-depth comprehension of the intertwining geographies of power that produce and shape public spaces.

From the above, however, ordinary people seem imperceptible and blurred dots that passively experience the streets, making use of the facilities and infrastructures created by the spatial patterns of capitalist development. The high-speed mobilisation of capital destroys old space and builds brand-new skyscrapers, shopping malls, and tower blocks to the advantage of the greedy rich, forcibly relegating second-class citizens in “the densely packed rowhouses of ethnic and working-class East Baltimore” (*ibid.*:128). Victims of the spatial and historical developments of the city, workers are expelled from the closing factories and reinserted in the increasingly precarious and low-paid service sector, thus embodying the tragic fulfilment of the neoliberal project.

From his window overlooking a trafficked road in Paris, Lefebvre (2004) observes the architectural constructions that disclose their political and financial power, as well as the people and vehicles circulating underneath. He traces their rhythms, patterns, and networks as they walk or transit; he follows their paces and actions while imagining their personal histories. Spatial and temporal flows are nonetheless regulated through the implementation of well-defined rules and restrictions: the mobilities of pedestrians and vehicles are regimented through the precise spaces allocated to them (pavements and lanes) and through a series of specific indications and symbols that they have to abide to (traffic lights and road signs).

Although capable to single out ordinary people walking, his gaze remains detached from the street, unable to distinguish immediately “the multiplicity of noises, murmurs, rhythms” (*ibid.*: 28) in which the passers-by are immersed. People and cars are clearly visible, but still at a distance: they experience the streets and the infrastructures that the spatial configurations of capitalist development have designed and developed through time, following the rules and practices that govern and discipline their mobilities. Vocal or visual details remain indistinct.

Only by walking down the street, as Massey does in the London neighbourhood of Kilburn, is it possible to get a sense of the myriad of relations and networks that stretch from the local to the global, and to capture the multiple connections and identities that make every place a “meeting place” (Massey 1994, 2005). Given its peculiar historical and socio-spatial paths, Kilburn appears as a heterogeneous, diverse, and chaotic district, where local and global instances continuously converge and interact through the patterns and networks that people draw. The bounded identity and introverted character that local communities often (pre)tend to have represents a fictional veil that people wear to cover their fears of the global, the unknown, the deviant. Kilburn is a necessarily extrovert community with multiple identities, whose boundaries, constructed by the connections, experiences, and networks of its inhabitants and passers-by, stretch to the whole city, the region, and the world.

The simple act of taking a stroll becomes a powerful means to live and experience the city, tracing its interrelated and multi-scalar links. It is along the street that the historical and spatial patterns of capitalist development are negotiated, confronted, resisted, and reconfigured by and through a plurality of intermeshing ordinary actions, combinations, and social contacts, acquiring a peculiar and unique contour. “Walkscapes” (Brambilla 2015a:146) soar to a significant epistemological and methodological tool, as they “transform space into ever-changing places, which are appropriated, given meaning, and represented by their inhabitants”. Similarly, De Certeau (1984:97-8, his emphasis) states:

“At the most elementary level, it [the act of walking] has a triple ‘enunciative’ function: it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian...; it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies *relations* among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic ‘contracts’ in the form of movements”.

### *Space-time-everyday*

At broader level, the combined readings of Harvey, Lefebvre, and Massey disclose, I argue, multiple perspectives to look at the spatial, temporal, and everyday dimensions of social processes that could sharpen a comprehensive-yet-nuanced gaze to analyse borders and the multifarious processes intersecting them. Disassembling social phenomena along the three-dimensional lines of space-time-everyday can provide variegated analytical angles through which to capture the entanglement of multi-scalar

relations at and across borders and eventually to construct the border itself as an epistemic point of departure for the analysis of social processes.

These three categories, however, should be considered neither as autonomous from each other, nor as given and predetermined, but rather as mutually interdependent and interrelated, developing a continuous and dialectical interaction. Looking at borders through the space-time-everyday prism would enable, I argue, a more complex and grounded understanding of the spatial, temporal, and everyday dynamics that articulate the differential mobilities of people, goods, and capital at and across borders: from the time-space acceleration generated by capitalist relations of domination, to the spatio-temporal dilutions imposed to certain mobilities by security restrictions, and the re-appropriation of spaces and times achieved through migrants' struggles in their everyday life. Besides, it would allow to grasp how connections and conflicts reproduce among and within each and every process, thus affecting (im)mobility patterns.

The point of departure for the analysis of the intertwining dimensions of space-time-everyday is the work of the French philosopher Henry Lefebvre, not simply as a tribute to his long dedication to the study of such categories, but also for his outstanding relevance in constructing my argument. In his 1974 book "La production de l'espace"<sup>1</sup>, Lefebvre investigates space not as a simple void, but rather as a social product, the result of social relations of production and reproduction. His ontological approach entails that space in itself cannot exist; rather, it is always bound up in time and social reality, historically and socially produced and transformed (Lefebvre 1991; see also Brenner 1997; Schmid 2008; Susan Robertson 2010). This conceptualisation of space engenders renovated epistemological assumptions: "If space is a product, our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production. The 'object' of interest must be expected to shift from *things in space* to the actual *production of space*" (Lefebvre 1991:36-37, his emphasis).

The focus on production connects structuralist accounts on the conflictual yet vital relation between capitalism and the state (Harvey 2003; Callinicos 2007), and political economy approaches on the role of borders, considered as indispensable institutions underlying that relation (Cox 2004; Coward 2005). Yet, Lefebvre's concept of "production" differentiates from the restricted and dogmatic notion proposed by Marxist economists, which narrow it down to the final object, i.e. the

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<sup>1</sup> Translated in English in 1991 as "The production of space".

product (Lefebvre 1991; Brenner 1997). For Lefebvre production is instead a whole “sequence of actions [which] imposes a temporal and spatial order upon related operations whose results are coextensive” (Lefebvre 1991:71); a constant relation between temporal/diachronic and spatial/synchronic activities “inseparable from orientation towards a goal – and thus also from functionality (the end and meaning of the action, the energy utilized for the satisfaction of a 'need') and from the structure set in motion (know-how, skills, gestures and co-operation in work, etc.)” (*ibid.*).

In Lefebvre, the productive process seems to unfurl contradictions, divergences, and nuances that break the homogeneity of space and time, just as the traffic laws interrupt and regulate the mobilities of people and vehicles on the street he observes. Being “at once a product of the capitalist mode of production and an economic-political instrument of the bourgeoisie” (*ibid.*:129), capitalist space discloses one of its contradictions. On the one hand, it is homogeneous because “all is equivalent, exchangeable, interchangeable”, in order to create and develop a complex infrastructural system of interconnections and networks that expedites the mobility of capital. On the other hand, it is fragmented “because it is processed in the form of lots and parcels, and sold on this basis” through a whole architecture of laws, institutions, and conventions that guarantee the correct enforcement of capitalist operations (Brenner and Elden 2009:233).

As Lefebvre argues (1991; see also Brenner and Elden 2009), space is always related to time: being a social and historical product, the production of space necessarily implies a parallel historical process. Like space, even time as an ontological category assumes for Lefebvre different yet complementary meanings. Distancing himself from the Marxian understanding of history as linear and deterministic, Lefebvre distinguishes between two types of time. The cyclical time refers to the innumerable and regular alternations of processes and events that articulate natural and biological life, from the heart beating to the rotation of months and seasons. At broader level, this time coincides with the great clock of history, moving slowly but steadily. The historical time alternates long epochs, in which socio-spatial configurations might endure for centuries without substantial changes, with violent or subtle ruptures that subvert the social order and impose new socio-economic regimes (see Braudel 1958; McGrew 2017).

Superimposing on the historical and measurable time, the linear time refers instead to the imagined, the irrational, the perceived. This grounded and relative

conception of time is fractured into irregular and undetermined subdivisions that articulate the everyday lives of people, with their schedules, cadences, ruptures, and pauses. New rhythms, patterns, and noises are therefore originated, interrupting or diverting the cyclical and linear repetitions, and creating differences (Lefebvre 2004; see also Massey 1991, 1992). With its artificial and social character, the linear time intersects with and challenges the monotony of the cyclical time, allowing for a more complete comprehension of capitalist relations and their repercussions on everyday life (Lefebvre 2004). Rather than being detached or discordant from each other, the cyclical and the linear share

“an antagonistic unity. They penetrate one another, but in an interminable struggle: sometimes compromise, sometimes disruption. However, there is between them an indissoluble unity: the repetitive tick-tock of the clock measures the cycle of hours and days, and vice versa” (*ibid.*:76).

The cyclical and linear times are continuously and dialectically interfacing, producing temporal differences, melodies, and repetitions. This relation does not occur in a void, but in the concrete and material space. Like space, time is not conceived as an absolute concept, measurable through clocks and quantifiable through history, but as a relative category, constantly changing and socially produced through the development of different relations of production. Like space, “social time is itself a social product” (*ibid.*:74): on the basis of its exchange-value it is bought and sold, while according to its use-value it is lived and experienced. Like space, time becomes at the same time monotonous and fragmented, homogeneous and subdivided: the time of work, sleep, and leisure that articulates the everyday life.

Being strictly related to, and interdependent with, temporal dynamics, the Lefebvrian notion of production of space, I argue, opens up more nuanced ways to look at borders and the entanglement of processes at and across them. The gaze that Lefebvre adopts permits him to capture both the process of spatio-temporal domination that constructs buildings, logistical infrastructures, and networks for the sake of capitalist development, and the numerous procedures and rules that regulate and discipline the mobilities of people and vehicles using them. Rather than opposing or contrasting each other, such processes are mutually constitutive, insofar as they concurrently facilitate and govern the circulation of capital, commodities, and people. Drawing from Lefebvre, the British geographer David Harvey rehabilitates a spatial dimension to Marx’s historical materialism, rejecting any philosophical issue over the

nature of space that is not revealed through the analysis of social practice. As he argues, “space is neither absolute, relative or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances. The problem of the proper conceptualization of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it” (Harvey 2009:13). The construction of a historical-geographical materialism, however, requires also a correlated analysis of time: like Lefebvre, Harvey conceives space and time as interdependent and socially produced, constantly shaped by the particular relations of production and power in which they are immersed.

Capitalism, and even more so the neoliberal regime of capital accumulation, has been characterised by the intention of eliminating, or at least reducing, spatio-temporal barriers in order to accelerate the turnover time of capital, i.e. the sum of production time and circulation time (Harvey 1989). For capital to circulate and thus (re)generate value as quickly as possible, it is indeed necessary to overcome spatial barriers, a process superbly grasped more than a hundred years earlier by Marx’s concept of annihilation of space through time (Marx 1973[1857]). With the advance of neoliberal globalisation, such spatio-temporal compression has been achieved through several means: from the investment in technological innovation to the development of means of transport, the planned obsolescence in consumption, the hastening of natural processes, and the acceleration of decision-making times.

These processes have significantly modified the organisational, geographical, and technical capacities of production systems, growingly relying on just-in-time mechanisms of production, logistics and distribution (see also Cowen 2014), and on the creation of “spatial fixes” for the increasingly faster circulation and mobilisation of capital, commodities, and people at global level (Harvey 1981, 1985, 1999; see also Jessop 2000, 2006). As Harvey shows (1989), the passage from one mode of production to another, or even from one regime of accumulation to another within the same mode of production, necessarily implies the transformation of social and personal conceptions of space and time. The transition from Fordism to neoliberalism engendered a significant alteration of spatio-temporal practices, leading to what Harvey defines as “time-space compression” (*ibid.*). A homogeneous, relatively stable, and standardised conception of space-time has been here substituted for a heterogeneous, fragmented, and disorderly one, dictated by the changing roles of both the factory and the society within neoliberal globalisation.

Either “imposed by main force through conquest, imperial expansion or neocolonial domination” or “contested from within... out of individual and subjective resistance to the authority of the clock and the tyranny of the cadastral map” (Harvey 1990:419), new concepts of space and time are continuously produced, renovating, changing, or revolutionising old ones. Struggles, Harvey continues (1990:420), may arise to define the objective qualities that space and time should acquire in specific circumstances, as well as to contrast “class, gender, cultural, religious and political differentiation in conceptions of time and space”. Whenever such struggles arise, they are regulated through force: the power of the dominant bourgeois class, with its control over market economy and juridical-political institutions, often resolves conflicts according to its most advantageous and suitable manner.

Although acknowledging the importance of class organisation and conflict, Harvey’s work focuses preponderantly on the analysis of the dominant conceptualisation of space and time, as emerged from the spatial evolutions, changes, and ruptures through history. What Harvey seems to overlook, I argue, is the analysis of how such processes affect not just the social dimensions of space and time but also the daily life of ordinary people, generating social and spatial conflicts. Within capitalism, individuals are imbued with “norms, models, values, collective and imperative forms of conduct, rules and forms of control” (Lefebvre 2014:354) that regulate and discipline their presence in the geographies of work, consumerism and leisure (Weeks 2007, 2011; Frayne 2015). Immersed in socio-economic relations and in the concrete materiality of the “lived”, the everyday life appears “colonised” (Debord 1961), permeated by the political-economic mechanisms that regulate capitalist society.

Departing from a critique of Lefebvre (1992) and more explicitly of Harvey (1993, 1994), another British geographer, Doreen Massey, provides an alternative reconstruction of the concepts of space and time. Space assumes in Massey a more vivid and dynamic character: it is not (only) the product of capitalist relations unfolding over a certain territory and dominating the lives of people, but rather the product of a heterogeneity of multi-scalar interrelations, the result of a “multiplicity of trajectories” (Massey 2005). For Massey space is socially constructed, but this construction is not fixed once and for all, rather, it is an “open ongoing production” (*ibid.*:55). Space and time remain distinct, yet co-implicated: space is the simultaneous

coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global.

Simultaneity, however, does not mean stasis (Massey 1992): given its nature, space is alive with a plurality of intertwining trajectories, and replete with a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, solidarity and cooperation. These different, multi-scalar relations occur simultaneously over space: processes of negotiation, contestation, and resistance between conflicting instances, therefore, happen on a daily basis. Any critique of neoliberal globalisation should thus take into consideration the specificity of the local in relation to the global, in order to engender a process of resistance that is politically effective. Massey's analysis seems able to capture not only the global capitalist relations of domination that pervade contemporary society, but also the local and everyday practices that a whole range of agents perform to negotiate or resist such relations.

Massey herself refuses a clear-cut dichotomy between a globalised, totalising, and unknown space, and a localised, situated, specific, and familiar place (Massey 2005). Such view fails to acknowledge the spatial multiplicities, fractures, and dynamics that intersect global and local spaces, conceiving them as two distinct categories: the former as an imperialistic invasion into social and everyday life dictated by the increasing expansion of capitalist relations, and the latter as a reactionary defence of a culturally bounded and distinctive place. Moreover, Massey continues, a Manichean distinction between global space and local place hides a linear and deterministic conception of development, which tends to imagine developing countries as societies lagging behind, positioned at a historically different stage of development. For Massey, instead, space should "be thought of as an emergent product of relations, including those relations which establish boundaries", while place

"is necessarily *meeting* place, where the 'difference' of a place must be conceptualised more in the ineffable sense of the constant emergence of *uniqueness* out of (and within) the specific constellations of interrelations within which that place is set ... and of what is made of that constellation" (*ibid.*:68, her emphasis).

Drawing from a radical critique of Laclau's dichotomous opposition between a dynamic and dislocated time versus a flat and apolitical space, Massey takes the intertwining correlation between space and time even further. Like space, time cannot be considered as an independent and absolute object, but rather as an interdependent

and mutually related social category that, together with space, articulates social relations. In arguing that “spatial is integral to the production of history... just as the temporal is to geography” (Massey 1991:84), Massey reaffirms the importance of considering space and time as interrelated social categories, just as Harvey and Lefebvre do. For Massey, however, “It is not that the interrelations between objects occur *in* space and time; it is these relationships themselves which *create/define* space and time” (*ibid.*:79, her emphasis).

Here lies the epistemological fracture with Lefebvre and even more so with Harvey: capitalist relations do produce space and time, but they do so in an uneven and variegated way, generating a multiplicity of local differences that penetrate the body of people. The time-space compression of neoliberal globalisation activates multi-scalar mechanisms of in/exclusion, engendering multiple power-geometries that accelerate certain mobilities while hindering or blocking others. As Massey puts it (1993:61, her emphasis):

“different social groups and different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn’t, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation *to* the flows and the movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway-differentiated mobility: some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it”.

In recent years, border studies have developed an increasing interest in the “power-geometry” of borders and their ability to regulate the differential temporalities of mobilities. Some authors have analysed the temporal discrepancies and contradictions among transnational mobilities, with their unequal impacts on both the diaspora (Zhou 2015) and the community of origin (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2013). Others have investigated the ever-changing temporal dimensions of securitisation measures and migration policies in their attempt to regulate transnational mobilities, with their repercussions on migrant bodies (Griffiths 2014; Shanthi Robertson 2014). In distancing themselves from all-encompassing historical reconstructions, these accounts provide a grounded and situated analysis of the consequences of bordering practices on migrant bodies, privileging the construction of individual (hi)stories. In so doing, they have already started to explore the third dimension of the gaze over border, i.e. the everyday.

The everyday is conceived neither as the mere opposition between productive and reproductive times, nor as a colonised territory that capitalism dominates or subjugates. Rather, it can be described as the personal and social tasks, activities, and movements that ordinary people perform in their daily routine; the intertwining and dialectical combination of working, biological, and leisure times that articulate the day; the intimate, familiar, and customary moments that accompany our individual or collective existence. The everyday is a lively, ever-changing, and complex whole including an infinite amount of indistinctive and variegated actions and events that are carried out, more or less instinctively or knowingly, throughout the day.

The starting point for the analysis of the everyday, Lefebvre suggests (2014: 119), should focus on those daily events and actions deprived of their highest and most abstract characteristics, “after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis”. At first blush, the everyday life appears de-politicised, bare, stripped of both its humble meanings and noble senses (cp. Agamben 1998), only to be reconstructed and revitalised through analytical work. The capitalist colonisation of everyday life, Lefebvre continues, represents one side of the coin, pertaining to the identification and critical examination of the political-economic structure that composes the external shell of contemporary society (Lefebvre 2014). An opposite process appears necessary to trace and seize the variegated, interdependent, and dialectical links that constantly traverse the heterogeneity of the everyday, thus leading to a more overarching critique of the capitalist system as a whole. As Lefebvre writes (2014:165):

“On the one hand, the historian or the man of action can proceed from ideas to men, from consciousness to being – i.e. towards practical, everyday reality – bringing the two into confrontation and thereby achieving criticism of ideas by action and realities. That is the direction which Marx and Engels nearly always followed in everything they wrote; and it is the direction which critical and constructive method must follow initially if it is to take a demonstrable shape and achieve results. But it is equally possible to follow this link in another direction, taking real life as the point of departure in an investigation of how the ideas which express it and the forms of consciousness which reflect it emerge. The link, or rather the network of links between the two poles will prove to be complex. It must be unravelled, the thread must be carefully followed. In this way we can arrive at a criticism of life by ideas which in a sense extends and completes the first procedure”.

The advent of capitalist relations of production has not only shaped spatial and temporal relations within society, but has also significantly changed the everyday lives of people, altering the socio-economic bonds between them and penetrating deep

inside their attitudes and behaviours. The unidirectional passage from the abstract analysis of the mode of production to the concrete repercussions on the everyday life is not sufficient to understand the complexity of the everyday, failing to capture the “multiplicity of trajectories” (Massey 2005), interrelations, and actions that characterise it. Rather, the critique of the everyday requires, and should bring to, the analysis and critique of the whole capitalist society, its inner functioning mechanisms, and its repercussions on the lives of people. As Yuval-Davis puts it (2013:9; see also De Certeau 1984), “the everyday functions as the foundational context for practices that clearly move beyond the everyday”.

*Looking at the border from the border*

Although diverse in their epistemological approach, the combined gazes of Lefebvre, Harvey, and Massey allow an in-depth and nuanced analysis of social processes, capable of capturing the structural and agential forces that produce and shape them, as well as the multiple interactions, connections, and conflicts among and within them. Space, time, and everyday should be considered as continuously interconnected and mutually interdependent: privileging spatial analysis should not imply the denial of temporal dimensions; vice versa, historical investigations should not leave behind spatial reconstructions. The everyday as a social category – that is, the lived experiences, the grassroots practices, and the conflictual relations – adds a further level of analysis, providing not only a critique of the capitalist system, but also a situated comprehension of the complex and multifarious threads that disentangle, unfold, and mobilise across space and time, adapting to, negotiating, or even rejecting social changes.

All these variegated and apparently contradictory perspectives seem necessary to grasp the multiplicity of processes and networks unfolding across the port/border area of Patras. The complexity of social phenomena requires indeed more complex theorisations, capable of grasping the structural and agential forces underlying social processes and changes, their intertwining and dialectical materialisation at and across borders, and the negotiating or resisting forces they encounter on the ground. While border studies have adopted each time a different lens to grasp the spatio-temporal intertwining of the various processes at and across borders, a situated gaze able to unravel the simultaneity of all these processes from their everyday materiality could further enrich them, enabling a synoptic vision over borders themselves.

This work wants neither to construct a grand theory about borders, nor to reduce the divergences between the different positions to an epistemological flatness. It does not presume to be impartial or to reach any sort of scientific truth, however interpreted or intended. It does not conceptualise borders through the binary oppositions between structure/agency, state/non-state actors, capital/labour, conflicts/networks. Rather, it wants to critically assess the multiplicity of border practices and theories by standing across the border, or better still, by starting from the empirical, grounded materiality of the border itself.

It does so in two ways. First, it empirically investigates these forces in a relational and situated manner, assessing their different functions, ultimate objectives, and interwoven relations. It offers a comprehensive investigation of the main processes that produce and shape the port/border area of Patras, and the numerous entanglements, nuances, interactions, and conflicts among and within them. Second, it analytically interrogates the different epistemologies by standing *at* the border: just as the border appears as a privileged site of investigation to analyse the different multi-scalar processes intersecting at and across it, so it can provide, I argue, food for thought to evaluate the various epistemological approaches to the study of borders, their advantages and shortcomings, their strengths and contradictions. Looking *at* borders *from* the everyday materiality of the border itself allows the researcher to grasp the multiplicity of spatio-temporal processes that intersect across borders, while simultaneously assessing the solidness of border theories through a grounded approach.

In this dual sense, I argue that borders should be better thought of as “meeting points”, i.e. places of encounter and clash of different theories, policies, and practices. The study of capitalist relations, of their historical development, and of their repercussions on spatial, temporal, and everyday dimensions is inescapable in order to understand current social processes. Yet, grounded, ethnographic work is likewise fundamental to grasp the uneven spatio-temporal configurations that such processes generate, and the multiple connections, interrelations, and conflicts that they produce at and across borders. Conceiving borders as “meeting points”, I maintain, provides a more variegated framework for the analysis of borders, capable of looking at the border not only as a passive site moulded by different agencies, but also as an active place capable of generating and producing social outcomes and changes.

The concept of borders as “meeting points” does not claim to be all-encompassing or infallible. Rather, it endeavours to conjugate a critical analysis of the multiple processes that converge at, intertwine, and depart from borders, with a more nuanced and situated examination of their impacts and outcomes on the everyday materiality of the border itself. It does so by taking the border as a point of departure to reconnect the variegated empirical and epistemological threads that intersect across it, looking at their practical embodiment on the ground. At the border, the three interrelated processes of neoliberalism, securitisation, and migrants’ autonomy continuously encounter, engage, and confront each other, shedding light on the epistemological principles that attempt to explain them. Through the space-time-everyday triad, the research analyses the particular historical trajectory that the port/border area of Patras has assumed, encouraging researchers and professionals to adopt a renovated view to open up new perspectives for the study of borders.

### **1.3 On the ground**

Being distant from international territorial borders – its only border being the sea – the port/border area of Patras conforms to the requirement of locating and studying borders away from the border itself, wherever they are to be found (see Balibar 1998; C. Johnson et al. 2011; R. Jones and Johnson 2014). In fact, being an international port, a series of global and European dynamics have therein attempted to create a borderless zone, in order to expand the European common market and to facilitate the exchange of goods and people. Other multi-scalar forces and policies have instead driven the increasing securitisation of the port area, erecting both tangible and intangible borders to guarantee the safety of commercial exchanges and the differential inclusion of migrants within the Greek and European labour markets. These counteracting, yet interacting, processes have been continuously experienced, performed, negotiated, and even contested by local institutions, citizens, and migrants, reconfiguring the port/border area of Patras in its unique way.

Only ethnography, therefore, can grasp the multifarious declinations that such multi-scalar dynamics have assumed in different contexts through time (Herbert 2000; Lombard 2014). As Brettel argues (2003, in Vertovec 2007:969; see also Donnan and Wilson 2010a), ethnographic research allows to “emphasize both structure and agency [by looking] at macro-social contextual issues, micro-level strategies and decision-making, and the mesolevel relational structure within which individuals operate”.

Whereas theoretical abstractions enable the comprehension of a wider and clearer picture, grounded and situated analyses remain fundamental to enhance “the fullness and complexity of social and political life” (De Genova 2012a:131), capturing the specificities of local situations and places, the primary causes that have historically produced them, and the mutable processes of negotiation, contestation, and resistance that they have encountered.

The choice of Patras was moved less by a rational calculus than by a pervasive “curiosity and a desire to understand” at the base of every “systematic self-critical inquiry” (Stenhouse 1981:103). This sense of curiosity sprang soon after my Master’s thesis, which looked at the intertwining and conflicting relations among the main legal provisions on migration and asylum, as well as at their practical translation at the port of Ancona. Together with Bari and Venice, the harbour was – and still is – one of the main Italian ports of entry for hundreds of undocumented migrants that were – and still are – systematically returned to Greece.

Driven simultaneously by the intention of further abstracting the theoretical extent of my research and the instinct of discovering the empirical manifestations of border theories on the other side of the Adriatic Sea, the port/border area of Patras appeared immediately as an interesting case study. The intertwining of multiple processes was evident from the first days of fieldwork: every afternoon hundreds of lorries gradually would approach the new port area, perform the ritual security checks, and wait to embark onto the ferryboats. Several police and port police members operated to enforce customary controls on lorries and in the surrounding areas, in order to prevent the materialisation of undesired threats. In the nearby abandoned factories, dozens of migrants gathered around, waiting for the most propitious moment to run towards the external port fences, overstep them, and sneak under one of the lorries queuing at the security checks or parked inside the port premises. As these processes unfolded, the researcher suddenly made its appearance, becoming visible and known to the various agents involved on the ground.

The presence of the researcher required a self-conscious analytical reflection of and with the self (England 1994), and an immediate negotiation with the pre-existing processes. The conceptualisation of the field constituted the first step in this path. Far from being a (post)colonial setting where to undergo a “radical encounter with alterity” (Peirano 1998:105), and yet not a return to the place of origin (Sultana 2015), the field simultaneously presented staggering commonalities and conspicuous

differences with what could be defined, although problematically, as “home”. Connections and restrictions, linkages and obstacles, networks and limitations permeated not only the locus of the research, but also the ontological experience of the researcher in the field. Just as migrants would struggle against the pervasive mechanisms of the border, so the researcher contrived to disentangle himself from these conflicting forces and find a dialectical way out of the challenge.

The multiple connections between home and the field concerned both structural processes and more grounded practices. At macro level, Greece and Italy shared a geographically and economically marginal position in the EU, exemplified by their participation in the infamous club of the so-called – “in a typical colonial way” (Hadjimichalis 2011:255) – PIIGS<sup>2</sup>, as well as historical and socio-cultural traits, epitomised in the phrase “una faccia, una razza”<sup>3</sup>, which Greek informants would sometimes exclaim as I disclosed my origins (see Pelliccia 2013, 2014). At micro level, the longstanding maritime connections between Patras and the main Italian and European port cities re-approached the Mediterranean shores, historically contributing to the diffusion of progressive political ideas and folkloristic cultural customs, such as the renowned carnival of Patras, influenced by those of Venice and Nice (Tsokopoulos 2006; see also Katsiardi-Hering 2011).

Despite the numerous connections between the two sides of the Adriatic Sea, further enhanced by the introduction of ferryboat lines in 1960 (Sotiropoulos 1993), several differences continued to divide them. Just as the affinities between port-cities should be continuously reassessed vis-à-vis the structural and power relations constructing them and differentiating them from the surrounding countryside (Driessen 2005; Gekas 2009; Tabak 2009), so I, as researcher, needed to negotiate myself with a multiplicity of discrepancies and impediments that complicated my presence on the ground. Clearly discernible were the linguistic barriers, both with the native population and the researched group, and the issue of access, exacerbated by the lack of any social contact with locals or of any extensive knowledge about the city prior to my arrival in the field.

The erection of these barriers imposed a critical self-reflection not only on their influence over the research process and, therefore, on the modalities to overcome (or

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<sup>2</sup> The unfortunate acronym to describe European most crisis-affected countries, i.e. Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain.

<sup>3</sup> Popular in both countries, this proverb can be literally translated as “one face, one race”, to express the socio-cultural affinities between the Greek and Italian peoples.

at least coexist with) them, but also on the commingling with previous personal aspects of the research experience. In relation to the former, the researcher could effectively adopt certain strategies of survival that would allow him to adapt to the unknown context. The employ of social media to construct relations in the field, informal gatekeepers to gain access to the factories, and snowball sampling method to expand social networks turned out to be useful for the outcomes of the research, although they were not immune from critical reflections, emotional labour or personal analyses (see McLean and Campbell 2003; Browne 2005; Reeves 2010; Bergman Blix and Wettergren 2015).

Regarding the latter, a more profound personal reflection was needed. On the one hand, a desultory sense of displacement would dominate during certain periods of the fieldwork, urging to re-evaluate the concepts of “home” and “belonging” (Kristeva 1991; Malkki 1995). As a precarious student, worker, and researcher in various cities and countries for about a decade, an individual interrogation on what to consider “home” continuously accompanied my journey, forging an adaptive spirit that crosses borders and cultures (see Anzaldúa 1987). Being catapulted into an unfamiliar field, memories of similar past moments of (dis)placement re-emerged, requiring a renovated process of re-adaptation to a different context.

Recognising the researcher’s inherent sense of displacement, on the other hand, does not mean to flatten his field experience and equate it with that of the researched group, similarly displaced in a context between their home and their desired destination (cp. Grohmann 2015:45ff). As critical geographers and anthropologists highlight (England 1994; Rose 1997; Ali 2015; Sultana 2015), issues of positionality and power relations inform a nuanced understanding of the multiple boundaries that cross the research field and the people traversing it. The mere fact of revealing my hometown – in this case, Ancona – would sometimes generate a scornful laugh among migrants, not simply for being one of the ferryboats’ potential destinations, but also for the awareness that I would need just a ticket to enter freely inside the port area<sup>4</sup>.

Yet, as Thapar-Björkert and Henry argue (2004), hierarchical relationships do not exist only on a unidirectional basis: the rigid demarcations that supposedly divide the researcher/oppressor and the researched/oppressed are in fact blurred and indistinct, generating a multiplicity of roles and identities that intersect across the whole research field. The impressive “extra-logistical knowledge” (Martin 2012; see

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<sup>4</sup> Field notes, 14/03/2015.

also Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos 2015, 2016) that migrants had accumulated in their everyday life; the numerous tactics of border crossing; the multifarious stratagems to avoid the legal dispositions on migration and asylum or, at least, to use them at their own advantage; the employ of their own language to communicate even in the presence of others: these represented only some examples of how power was constantly shifting between the researcher and the researched, influencing the research process.

Charged with epistemological pressures, the researcher attempted to reconnect the different threads of identity and power, as well as their continuous and at times conflictual unfolding over space. It is in the field that all these threads came to life, thus turning into a “meeting point” of variegated and intermingling spatio-temporal connections, restrictions, and struggles. As the researcher endeavoured to grasp and comprehend the three correlated moments shaping borders and their simultaneous unravelling across space, the border itself became a privileged site of epistemological reflection on the roles of both the self and the other, as well as on the research process more widely.

Throughout the nine months in the field (January-September 2015), I roughly divided the time at my disposal according to the three central objects of enquiry of the research. During the first months (January-March), I focused on the analysis of neoliberalism and its spatio-temporal repercussions on the port of Patras, interviewing professors, specialists, and OLPA members. In the following months (April-May), I captured the influence of security measures and migration policies in the port of Patras, contacting and interviewing OLPA members, Hellenic Police (HP) and Hellenic Coast Guard (HCG) officers, and representatives of local associations and NGOs. In the last period (June-September), I spent most of the time in the abandoned factories facing the new port area, talking with the migrants that occupied those empty spaces.

For a better understanding of the choices I made in the field and the issues I dealt with, the analysis of the field methods is divided into three different sub-sections, corresponding to the aforementioned periods of time (unless indicated), explaining the reasons behind my choices, the advantages they brought, the problems I encountered, and the potential alternatives I could have had. However, I did not always follow a rigid schedule; rather, I abided by a more flexible schedule, according to a variety of personal choices, external factors and, not least, chance. As a result, the three sub-

sections are in reality much more blurred, intertwining, and mutually constitutive than it may seem in the written form.

### *Researching neoliberalism and logistics*

Before actually expounding the research methods employed for the investigation of neoliberalism, logistics and crisis, a brief clarification of these terms is necessary. Following Harvey (1989, 2005), I conceive neoliberalism as the peculiar phase of capitalist development that emerged in the late 1970s, characterised by a radical change in the individual and social experiences of space and time. Through the disruption of the Keynesian compromise between capital and labour, which guaranteed a certain degree of social and economic stability in the aftermath of WWII, neoliberalism brought about an intensive program of privatisation of welfare provisions, deregulation of economic activities, and general withdrawal of the state from most sectors of the economy, with severe repercussions on social and individual habits, everyday lives, reproductive activities and, ultimately, ways of thinking. Yet, as some authors have aptly pointed out (Peck 2012, Fouskas and Gökay 2012, 2019), neoliberalism has neither been the result of a uniform theoretical doctrine, nor has it merely represented the overwhelming geopolitical domination of certain capitalist countries over others. Rather, it has been, and manifested as, a highly contested and complex process that has developed different characteristics even among core capitalist countries, engendered multiple power shifts at global level, and acquired variegated and uneven configurations on the ground, through continuous forms of negotiation, confrontation and resistance (Peck and Theodore 2007; Smith 2008; Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010).

Part and parcel of the neoliberal transformations at global level, logistics has acquired a prominent role in demolishing the spatio-temporal barriers connecting production and consumption sites (Cowen 2014). The staggering development of transport networks and telecommunication infrastructures has accelerated, and been accelerated by, the process of neoliberal globalisation, allowing financial and productive capital to be transferred worldwide while strengthening distribution links along the supply chain networks (Neilson 2012, Neilson and Rossiter 2013, Cowen 2014). At smaller scale, the same process has occurred at European level: the deepening and widening of the European common market, in turn a political-economic response to the neoliberal changes at global level, has gone hand in hand with the

creation and development of a Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T, as chapter 3 will show), aiming to connect and integrate loci of production, distribution and consumption.

The logistical transformations at global and European level have affected not only key nodes within the supply chains, but also secondary hubs and cities along them. This appeared particularly true by standing across the port/border area of Patras: standing from the border, the critical observation of the logistical networks traversing it, to which a great section of chapter 4 is indeed dedicated, could disclose a breach from which to analyse the political-economic changes occurring at European and national level and, more broadly, to grasp the multifarious functions and roles of borders. However, I argue, the logistical revolution cannot be considered in isolation, but as deeply intertwined with the neoliberal transformations at global and European level. For this reason, the use of the term neoliberalism in lieu of logistics has allowed me to consider the broader political-economic framework behind such global transformations and, at the same time, to examine other interrelated dynamics that shaped the configuration of the port/border area of Patras.

Among these dynamics, the 2008 economic crisis certainly represents an important one, having had severe repercussions on the country's financial and economic stability, as well as on the everyday life of its population. Throughout the thesis, I will indeed discuss the impact of the crisis on, *inter alia*, the elaboration of administrative reforms, the implementation of infrastructural works, and the changes in migrants' mobility patterns. However, some caveats are hereby necessary. First, as Fouskas and Dimoulas have convincingly argued (2013), the burst of the crisis in Greece is not merely the conjunctural result of a downwards spiral at international level, but the backlash of the "crisis of crisis management" (*ibid.*) that started three decades earlier. In the microcosm of Patras, the economic crisis seems to have therefore exacerbated the 1980s tremendous process of de-industrialisation that, despite massive governmental financial interventions, led to the closure of most factories along the industrial area: a process from which the city never really recovered.

Second, the current economic crisis did not seem to have had a significant impact on port activities or, more generally, on other processes shaping the port/border area of Patras. According to several sources I interviewed, the decline in transit traffic that Patras has been experiencing since the 2000s is not directly related to the crisis,

but to the logistical developments in Greece. In other words, as I was standing across the port/border area of Patras, the economic crisis *per se* or the political and economic responses that have been adopted since then did not seem to have significantly affected the port/border area itself, or the processes intersecting across it. It is for such reasons that the economic crisis is not discussed in depth in the thesis.

Having cleared the air, I will now proceed to define the research methods that guided me through the analysis of neoliberal practices. These methods cannot be simply framed as “ethnography of the state” (Mountz 2010; see also J. Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Billo and Mountz 2016), for methodological and ontological explanations. Although employing interviews and observations, the research lacks a detailed and in-depth ethnographic analysis of institutional procedures and practices, for the mere reason that this represented neither the purpose of the current research, nor a valid method to answer the research question. Even supposing the importance of institutional agents in implementing or negotiating neoliberal practices and shaping spatio-temporal relations across the border, their role was not necessarily the most prominent or outstanding.

Rather, the institutional ethnography should be comprehended within a “larger project of re-establishing borders as specific ethnographic sites that also have much to contribute to broader debates about power, identity, culture, and state-making in contemporary world” (Cunningham and Heyman 2004:292). If borders become the methodological point of departure (see Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), then the researcher has the arduous task of grasping the multiple and intertwining processes that unfold at and across them, whatever their nature or origin is. In this respect, state and local institutions continuously interact with a myriad of other agents, from NGOs, associations, private entities, local citizens, and migrants, which weave overlapping or alternative socio-spatial relations.

Field mapping and informal conversations with locals occupied the first weeks of fieldwork, in order to familiarise myself with the unknown environment. Observations and “walkscapes” (Brambilla 2015a) emerged as initial efficient methods not only to define my presence in the field and construct spatial patterns, but also to get acquainted with the variegated agents, dynamics, and processes that intertwined at and across the port/border area: the transient relations between the customers of the bar inside the passenger terminal; the exchange of information among the security forces around the external perimeter of the port; the scheduled arrivals

and departures of ferryboats and the hustle of dis/embarkation activities in-between; the sparse groups of migrants that periodically attempt to jump the fences and run towards the ferryboats.

In this respect, the location of the accommodation turned out to be advantageous for the research outcomes. During the nine months in the field, “home” was a small studio flat in the southern periphery of the city, the furthest away from the city centre among the flats I visited upon my first arrival in Patras, but close enough to the entrance of the new port, which has only two access points located about 1.5 km from each other. The position of the flat encouraged me to take long strolls all along the national road dividing the port from the abandoned industrial area, thus experiencing first-hand the multiple relations and conflicts traversing the port area on a daily basis.

After the initial period of observation, I engaged in informal conversations with managers and employees of some among the business activities around the new and old ports. These first talks aimed to have preliminary insights about the potential effects of the expansion of the port on the everyday lives of local citizens and workers, as well as to grasp their perceptions and feelings in relation to the migrants living in the area (or that used to live in the proximity of the old port). In this sense, I was able to gather rudimentary information from the field, which allowed me to constantly develop new questions and objects of enquiry. By the end of the fieldwork, I had gathered 25 informal conversations and interviews with workers and managers of commercial activities, hotels, and travel agencies located in the proximity of both ports (see Table 1).

At the end of January, I began to contact purposively-selected professional and institutional informants, in particular Prof. Vasilis Pappas, member of the Laboratory for Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Patras, and the OLPa administrative offices. The main research questions were related to the spatio-temporal modalities of the expansion of the port, the role of the different institutions involved – the EU, the national government, OLPa, and the municipality –, and the current configuration of the two ports vis-à-vis the economic crisis and the abrupt reduction in transit traffic.

Even the intentional selection of professionals was in some cases the result of a multiplicity of connections and threads that departed from the University of London and, in turn, unwound towards a variety of other places. The contact of the Laboratory for Urban and Regional Planning was indeed suggested by my third supervisor soon

after the upgrade viva, and turned out to be a valid resource: not only had the professor collaborated with other academics in the elaboration of a research project on the port/city relations, but he also provided me with other useful contacts that could have helped me answer my research questions.

WORKERS AND INHABITANTS				
INTERVIEWEE	DATE	DURATION	LOCATION	TYPE
Mr G. P.: Employee, Spyliopoulos Factory (NPA)	15.01	30m	Employee's working station	II
Ms A.: Employee, Georgiopoulos furniture shop (NPA)	16.01	45m	Shop's premises	II
Mr S. P.: Employee, Nissan car dealer (NPA)	16.01	45m	Nissan offices	II
Mr D.: Manager, Praktiker supermarket (NPA)	22.01	30m	Reception at Praktiker	II*
Bartender, Momento Café (NPA)	29.01	30m	Momento Café	IC
Mr V.: Manager, Mertikas Travel Agency (OPA)	30.01	45m	Agency's premises	II
Mr L.: Manager, Rose Travel Agency (OPA)	30.01	30m	Agency's premises	II
Mr A.: Manager, Supercargo (OPA)	05.02	30m	Agency's premises	II
	09.02	15m	Agency's premises	IC
Mr S. K.: Manager, Akropolis Travel Agency (OPA)	05.02	20m	Agency's premises	II
Mr N. K.: Employee, Manolopoulou Travel Agency (OPA)	06.02	30m	Agency's premises	II
Mr P. A.: Manager, Mediterranean Star Travel Agency (OPA)	09.02	30m	Agency's premises	II
Mr E. M.: Owner, Astir Hotel (OPA)	16.04	45m	Hotel offices	SSI
Receptionist, Adonis Hotel (OPA)	23.04	45m	Hotel reception	II
Ms K.: Employee, AT Real Estate (OPA)	23.04	20m	Real Estate offices	IC
Employee, Deli bar "The palace of taste" (NPA)	17.06	15m	Bar premises	IC
Shop Assistant, Edelweiss Patisserie (NPA)	17.06	15m	Shop premises	IC
Ms F. B.: Manager, Patras Smart Hotel (NPA)	19.06	1h	Hotel offices	SSI
Mr G. L.: Manager, BMG car rental (OPA)	22.06	30m	Agency's premises	II
Mr M. V.: Manager, Dient car rental (OPA)	22.06	30m	Agency's premises	II
Mr L. G.: Receptionist, Acropole Hotel (OPA)	22.06	45m	Hotel lounge	II
Mr S. H.: Employee, Avance car rental (OPA)	22.06	20m	Agency's premises	II
Mr A. K.: Manager, Sixt car rental (OPA)	23.06	20m	Agency's premises	II
Mr D. T.: Manager, Galaxy City Centre Hotel (OPA)	24.06	30m	Hotel reception	SSI
Employee, Hertz car rental (NPA)	30.06	30m	Agency's premises	II
Ms D.: Employee, Avis car rental (OPA)	09.07	30m	Agency's premises	II
Manager, Momento Café (NPA)	12.09	15m	Momento Café	IC

**Table 1: Local workers and inhabitants contacted during fieldwork.**

**Legend:** NPA new port area; OPA old port area; II informal interview; SSI semi-structured interview; IC informal conversation; \* with translator.

That first informal conversation inaugurated the employment of a snowball sampling method that, in a restricted and unknown environment such as the port area of Patras, appeared an ideal solution to be quickly introduced to new informants and to trace

connections among the various social agents populating the field (see Browne 2005). During the first two meetings with Prof Pappas, the latter provided me with the names of the two other professors of the University of Patras that worked on the aforementioned research project (Prof Athanassios Dimas of the Department of Civil Engineering and Prof Kostas Tsekouras of the Department of Economics) and, above all, of a transport planner and consultant expert for the port area, Mr Nikos Milionis, with whom I had five meetings throughout the fieldwork. In turn, these informants gave me other useful contacts and documents to further investigate the topics I needed to develop, gradually expanding the interconnected network of actors and institutions present in the field. Over time, as I narrowed down the research scope or expounded upon some particular research gaps, the geography of informants progressively restricted to few names that were frequently reiterated.

The snowball sampling could also open up accesses to particular persons or institutions when official channels, such as the email or the physical presence, blatantly failed to achieve that. Following my written request on January 26, 2015, to meet the manager of the OLPa economic or technical departments, the accounting office replied almost three months later, laconically informing me that, “as a company, we haven’t done a research about the results of the relocation and how this affects logistical, commercial, and economic activities”<sup>5</sup>. Only a few days after the initial email, during an encounter with the Superfast office manager<sup>6</sup>, I nevertheless obtained the contact of OLPa Director of Development, and from him, quite unexpectedly, that of OLPa Port Facility Security Manager (PFSM), thus disclosing an opportunity to access the closed environment of the Port Authority through more informal references.

The snowball method, however, is not exempt from shortcomings, especially when the role of certain agents is unclear or, on the contrary, overpowering. Particular issues emerged while attempting to contact and interview members of the municipality that might have played a role in, or at least provided some information about, the process of port expansion and the spatial conflicts with OLPa. Despite the multiple contacts, connections, and confrontations between the municipality and OLPa that emerged from the interviews, it remained difficult to find someone with clear roles or responsibilities within the municipality. It is only between May and June, after several

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<sup>5</sup> Email from OLPa, 16/04/2015.

<sup>6</sup> One of the four shipping companies operating between Patras and Italy, the others being Anek Lines, Minoan and Grimaldi Lines. Superfast and Anek Lines conduct a joint partnership in the Greece-Italy routes, while the latter two are part of the same transnational corporation (the Grimaldi Group), providing different routes and services.

requests and contacts, that I managed to meet first the Land Surveyor of the Department of Urban Planning at the municipality of Patras, and then the Head of Planning at ADEP, the Municipal Office for the Development of Patras. However, their reconstructions did not add much to the information I had already collected, except for a greater confusion about the roles of, and conflicts between, the municipality and OLPa over the port area.

In other cases, multidirectional attempts to delve deeper into certain issues culminated with the reiteration of the same old names, as symbol of their alleged influence. As I was exploring the historical industrial development of Patras, research at the central library and in several public offices<sup>7</sup> produced the same result: the mention of Mr Nicholaos Sarafopoulos, a former Health and Safety engineer who authored a detailed book about the industrial history of the Achaia Region. In similar endeavours to expound upon the role of OLPa and the municipality in the process of port expansion, the name of Mr Milionis sprang up several times among university professors and municipal offices, emerging as a relevant authority in the field (see Table 2).

On the other hand, the emergence of the same names attested not only the relative scarcity of first-hand informants and their gradual exhaustion as the fieldwork went by, but also the interconnectedness among the different sources. Public and private entities, national and local authorities, independent specialists and university professors, and even local businesses and commercial activities: to some extent all these social agents were involved in, or re-adapted themselves to, the spatial development of the city, with variegated and intertwining mutual relations.

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<sup>7</sup> Over a span of few hours, with the intercession of local employees, officers and even private people, I was bounced between the Municipality of Patras, the Municipal Registry Office, the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Peloponnese and Western Greece Industries; field notes 12/09/2017.

PROFESSIONAL AND EXPERTS				
INTERVIEWEE	DATE	DURATION	LOCATION	TYPE
Prof Vasilis Pappas: Laboratory for Urban Planning Unit, Department of Architecture, University of Patras	03.02	2h	UoP Offices	II
	17.03	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI
	26.05	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI
Head of Division of Technical Department (later Director of Development), OLPa	11.02	1h	OLPa Offices	SSI
	15.05	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI
Mr Nikos Milionis: CEO, Metron Spatial Planning and Development; Consultant expert for the port area	12.02	1h 30m	Metron Offices	II
	19.02	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI
	23.03	2h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI
	12.05	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI
	22.06	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI
Prof Athanassios Dimas: Chair of Department of Civil Engineering, UoP	13.03	1h	UoP Offices	SSI
Prof Kostas Tsekouras: Department of Economics, UoP	22.04	1h	UoP Offices	SSI
Land Surveyor, Department of Urban Planning, Municipality of Patras	11.05	1h	Municipality of Patras	SSI
Mr Nikolaos Sarafopoulos: Hellenic Institute for Occupational Health and Safety; Author of the book “Historical Album of the Achaean Industry, 1825-1975” (in Greek)	15.05	3h	Panachaiko Bar, Psila Alonia Square, Patras	SSI*
Head of Planning, ADEP (Municipal Agency for the Development of Patras)	16.06	2h	ADEP Offices	SSI
	14.07	15m	Phone Conversation	IC

**Table 2: Professionals and experts contacted and interviewed.**

**Legend: UoP University of Patras; II informal interview; SSI semi-structured interview; IC informal conversation; \* with translator.**

### *Researching securitisation and humanitarianism*

The investigation of security matters required instead the employment of other methodological approaches, as issues of ethics, institutional accessibility and information sharing acquired imperative relevance. In order to comply with ethical concerns, names of public officials, social workers and private inhabitants have been purposefully removed, and their disclosure might be considered upon request. Bureaucratic operations, unanswered emails, continuous phone calls, and protracted waits often constituted the standard procedures to approach certain informants or reach institutional figures in and out of uniform. In only one case was the snowball sampling efficient to open the doors of the security department offices: at OLPa, where the proximity of technical, economic, and security divisions in the same building facilitated the personal referral from one office to another. In all other cases, the presence of the researcher had comprehensibly to be introduced and mediated through forms, phone calls, and meeting arrangements, even in a traditionally informal (but highly bureaucratic) environment.

A research on security measures in the port area, however, did not simply mean the multiplication of red tape, but it also involved a more profound reflection on the role of the researcher itself and a stronger negotiation with the surrounding milieu. Caught between police authorities and migrants, the researcher constantly risked being belittled or disparaged by either side, compromising his work on the field. In some cases, the former appeared unwilling to talk to or to share certain information with the researcher, seen as an intruder in highly sensitive matters. The latter would, instead, continuously enquire about the social benefits of the research in potentially improving their everyday situation, or even develop a sense of mistrust and suspicion once having spotted the researcher inside the prohibitive premises of the port.

The researcher was therefore in the middle of a methodological quandary, trapped among a multiplicity of institutions and individuals that could easily spoil or slow down the overall research project. Transparency and openness on the research purposes and the use of data became therefore fundamental factors that could assure the trust of the people involved (whether they be public or private officers, social workers, or migrants) and the institutions they potentially represented. Whereas written requests or phone calls were necessary to open certain doors, it was inside those offices or in the everyday life of the factories that confidence was built and continuously negotiated between the researcher and the informants.

Even if access was granted, obtaining certain data or information from police forces, local authorities, or associations was not always straightforward. In my research for primary data about legal migration flows within the city, I was sent to the local responsible of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), after having visited several municipal offices. In a first informal conversation, she told me that she could have been able to provide me with data about local migration patterns (“This is the easiest part”, she once affirmed<sup>8</sup>), although she never gave me such information. Conversations with HP deputy commander and commander, and with the HCG Chief Petty Officer, did not bring better results, either for the ostensible reluctance to provide past figures on asylum claims and recognition in Patras<sup>9</sup>, or for the alleged unavailability of data regarding arrests in the port area<sup>10</sup>.

In the investigation of the repercussion of migration and asylum policies on the everyday life of migrants, I came across a wide array of local, national, and

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<sup>8</sup> Informal conversation, 22/05/2015.

<sup>9</sup> Field notes, 16/07/2015.

<sup>10</sup> Semi-structured interview with the HCG Chief Petty Officer, 04/07/2015.

international associations and NGOs in Patras and in Greece more generally, with political, religious, or humanitarian nature. Interviews and informal conversations with members, volunteers and activists of Kinisi<sup>11</sup>, the Hellenic Red Cross (HRC), Praksis, Doctors of the World, and the archbishopric, just to mention some of the associations and institutions in Patras providing legal, medical or material support to migrants, aimed to reconstruct the geography of cooperation and assistance in the port/border area of Patras through time, as well as the multifarious boundaries of in/exclusion that such associations had constantly drew and shaped.

Yet, in these cases, other issues emerged. Despite the eagerness of these associations to share information on their roles and activities, it became soon apparent that they had to do less with dealing with migrants' living conditions in the factories, than with abiding by and enforcing European or national dispositions on migration regulation and management (see Walters 2012; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Garelli, Sciurba, and Tazzioli 2018). In the deepening of the research, new borders were erected between the variegated sphere of NGOs and associations, financially supported by European or national funds for the fulfilment of specific projects, and migrants in the factories, increasingly detached and excluded from the little assistance provided by such associations, thus reinforcing the conditions of their geographical and socio-economic marginalisation.

In this respect, more relevant were the informal conversations I had with Mr Vasilis Ladas, a lawyer and writer with expertise in migration and asylum issues, and Mr A. V., one of the founders of Kinisi. Both contacts, provided to me by Mr Milionis in two different meetings, helped me reconstruct with legal documents, pictures, and personal memories the origins, developments, and aftermaths of the previous migrant settlement, located in the old port and destroyed by the police in July 2009. Since the two informants did not speak English fluently, the employment of translators was deemed necessary. Translators were either found by the informant himself (as occurred in two of the four meetings I had with Mr Ladas) or selected among my personal acquaintances. If the quality of the interviews might have been affected, it was nonetheless the only possible way to communicate with them, in order to grasp information about the old camp that nobody else could have provided. Moreover, it

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<sup>11</sup> Kinisi (in Greek, the complete name is Κίνηση υπεράσπισης των δικαιωμάτων προσφύγων και μεταναστών, transliterated as Kinisi yperaspisis ton dikaiomaton prosfygon kai metanaston, and translated as Movement for the defence of refugees and migrants' rights, in short Kinisi) is a grassroots association born in 2007.

represented another way to create and establish contacts: one of the translators, a colleague of Mr Ladas, once offered to drive me along the different migrant settlements in the area of the old port, explaining in more details what the situation at the time was (see Table 3).

SECURITY/HUMANITARIAN WORKERS				
INTERVIEWEE	DATE	DURATION	LOCATION	TYPE
Georgios: Former member of Kinisi	18.01	3h	Tour of the new port; Neo Pallas Café, Patras	IC
	26.06	1h 30m	Café in Akti Dimaion, Patras	IC
Port Facility Security Manager, OLPa	11.02	2h	OLPa Offices	II
	05.05	30m	<i>Ibid.</i>	IC
	02.07	2h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI
Mr C. K.: Social Worker, HRC	19.02	1h	HRC Offices	II
--- also with Ms G. P., Social Worker, HRC	31.03	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	II
	08.07	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	II
Mr Vasilis Ladas: Lawyer, former member of Kinisi, author of the book “Mousaferat”	18.03	1h	Office of Mr Ladas, Patras	SSI*
	31.03	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI*
	09.07	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI*
	23.07	1h	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI*
Ms E. N.: Lawyer, HRC	31.03	1h	HRC Offices	SSI
Mr G. K.: Lawyer, collaborator with Mr Ladas	02.04	1h	Car tour through the old Afghan camp	IC
Father of the Church of Agia Sofia	20.04	1h	Sacristy of the Church	II
Father of the Church of the Holy Apostles	29.04	30m	Office of the Father	II
Deputy-Bishop of the Mitropolis of Patras	05.05	1h	Mitropolis Offices	SSI
Ms G. T.: Social Worker and Local Coordinator of Praksis, Patras	14.05	1h	Praksis shelter	SSI
	24.07	1h 30m	Praksis Drop-in Centre	SSI
Father of the Church of Agios Andreas and his assistant	22.05	30m	Churchyard	II
IOM Responsible in Patras	22.05	30m	IOM Offices	IC
	17.07	1h 30m	Ypovrycheio Café, Patras	IC
Mr A. V.: Founding member of Kinisi	26.05	2h	His home, Patras	SSI*
Priests of the Church of Agia Trianda	29.05	30m	Church of Agia Trianda	II
Ms E. S.: Social Worker, Doctors of the World	29.05	1h	Association Offices, Patras	SSI*
Volunteer, Kinisi	02.06	1h	Kinisi's premises	SSI*
HCG Chief Petty Officer, Security Department	04.07	1h	HCG Offices, new port of Patras	SSI
	31.07	30m	<i>Ibid.</i>	SSI
HP Commander and Deputy-Commander, Immigration Department	08.07	1h 15m	HP Offices, Patras	SSI
HP Commander, Immigration Department	16.07	30m	<i>Ibid.</i>	II
Interim Head of the Department dealing with training, quality insurance and documentation, Asylum Service, Athens	16.09	2h	Premises of the Asylum Service, Athens	SSI

**Table 3: Security and humanitarian workers contacted and interviewed.**

**Legend: IC informal conversation; II informal interview; SSI semi-structured interview; \* with translator.**

Researching migration and its entanglements with securitarian and humanitarian issues also entails coming into contact with numerous legal definitions and linguistic artifices employed to connote migrants themselves, with correlated consequences on

their everyday life. Different informants would often refer to migrants according to their points of view or specific interests: so, for HP and HCG officers, migrants were often defined by their status in the country as documented/undocumented or legal/illegal, while for members of NGOs and associations they were considered as unaccompanied minors to be protected from the violence of police officers; vulnerable individuals to be provided with shelter and psychosocial assistance; asylum seekers waiting for their family reunification request to be processed; or recognised refugees to be integrated in society (see Walters 2012). For some local inhabitants, instead, they were just immigrants, so as to reinforce an economic view on migration movements that sees migrants only as exploitable labour force (see Mezzadra 2015).

Language, Foucault reminds us (Foucault 1994; see also R. Jones 2009), does create categories of subjects and boundaries between them. The subdivision of migrants into particular social categories not only corroborates the “legal production of migrant illegality” (De Genova 2004), but also creates socio-political distinctions among migrants which *de facto* validate the erection and multiplication of securitarian and humanitarian borders (Walters 2012; De Genova 2013a; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). The differentiation of migrants into legal categories, Cabot argues (2013), either facilitates their eligibility into particular programs of assistance, or increase their social stigma.

In order to eschew the ontological entrapment in the governmental regime of migration management, the research will employ the term “migrant” to characterise the people living in the abandoned factories. Being aware of the blurred boundaries between “migrants” and “refugees” (De Genova, Garelli, and Tazzioli 2018) and of the confused definition of the word “migrant” itself (Bridget Anderson and Blinder 2017), I employ the term “migrant” as devoid of any legal, social, or political implications, simply referring to its inner meaning of a multitude of people being *en route*, transiting through a place that is neither their home nor their destination. Whenever I do use national, ethnic, or legal categories, these only serve the purpose of enriching the analysis, rather than exacerbating divisions. If I thus manage to avoid terminological problems, practical issues in the relation with migrants remain.

### *Researching migrants' autonomy*

The first contacts with migrants in the factories date back to the initial weeks in the field. “Walkscapes” had already been useful to explore the area, but its amplitude and

the multiplicity of roads and alleys intersecting it rendered difficult an appraisal of the places actually occupied by migrants and their main entrances (see Figure 1). After two consecutive weekends of bad weather, on a mid-February Sunday one of the acquaintances I met at the beginning of the fieldwork, Georgios, offered to drive me with his scooter around the various factories. Given his better knowledge of the place – Georgios is a former member of Kinisi who used to visit regularly the old migrant camp and later the factories to provide basic assistance – I accepted his invitation.

For geographical proximity we began with the VESO B factory, a small complex now completely flattened, where three migrants were sitting in the distance, while other two (one of whom was sleeping) were a bit further away, under the shade of a tree. The initial access to the premises was far from hospitable. When Georgios and I introduced ourselves to them, we discovered that apparently none of them could speak English or French, although we had the impression that they were reluctant to talk to us. Only a few weeks later, after regular visits to the factories and through systematic contacts with and among migrants, I managed to gain access to VESO B and grasp its internal mechanisms.

After the first failed attempt, I expressed my intention to enter the nearby factory of Peiraiki-Patraiki, the huge abandoned textile factory just on the other side of the unused railway. Georgios uttered instead his perplexities, saying that there could have been some migrants patrolling the entrance. As he said that, six Afghan people came into view from the distance, directing towards us. As they arrived, we introduced ourselves but, since they did not speak English very well, they only advised us to go to the AVEX factory, where a friend of theirs could have spoken with us.

AVEX is a former wood factory located halfway along the external fence surrounding the port area. When we arrived there, we stopped in front of the entrance, and an Afghan migrant walked towards us. After the reciprocal introductions, I explained to him the reasons of my visit, and he, in turn, told me something about himself and the other people in the factory. Despite his recent arrival in Patras – although, as I found out later, he returned to Greece after having been deported to Afghanistan – he immediately showed his “knowledge of mobility” (Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos 2016:6): when I asked him whether I could have visited the factory from time to time, he replied, “Yes, you can come whenever you want, but not

on Tuesdays, because the police usually arrive in the morning and catch all the people without documents”<sup>12</sup>.



**Figure 1: The position of the main migrant settlements in relation to the new port and the abandoned industrial area.**

Source: Elaboration from Zisimopoulou 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Field notes, 15/02/2015.

After our brief conversation, we headed to the few shacks at the crossroad between Akti Dimaion and Venizelou Street, in front of the northern exit of the port. Here some Sudanese migrants would usually gather to socialise among themselves and carry out petty economic activities, such as cleaning the windscreens of the cars at the traffic light or helping people put their trolleys back in a nearby supermarket. As we made our acquaintance, they invited us inside their shelter to continue our conversation. While two of them were doing the laundry and tidying up the place, we had a little talk with a third one about their living conditions and legal situation, a topic that, I would have discovered later, often worked well as icebreaker.

That first quick visit turned out to be helpful, as from that moment onwards I could have a point of reference inside some of the settlements. Yet, the issue of access was not so easily solved: when Georgios drove me around the industrial area, he seemed to overlook the abandoned paper mill Ladopoulos, although I had noticed the presence of migrants there during my regular explorative strolls along the port area. Only a few weeks later the question of the presence of migrants at Ladopoulos came up, during an informal conversation with an Afghan migrant living at the AVEX factory. While sitting on the top of the AVEX tower, overlooking the whole port area, he suddenly pointed at the paper mill in the distance, affirming that some other Afghan migrants were living there. I made him notice the presence of municipal offices inside the premises, but he replied that nobody had ever complained about the situation, as if migrants and the municipality comfortably shared the same space<sup>13</sup>.

It was only through the intercession of another Afghan migrant, three months later, that I eventually entered the Ladopoulos settlement for the first time. The delays in accessing the factory were due not only to the continuous patrols performed by police and private security forces around the area, but also to the difficulty in finding a gatekeeper that could have accompanied and introduced me there. As soon as I found one, I decided to go with him, although the time contingency was slightly unfortunate. That Sunday, in fact, the main gate of the factory was closed and kept under surveillance, compelling us to jump the external fences of the factory, under the inattentive watch of the private security forces across the road. When I eventually went in, I spoke with a couple of migrants, who translated my words to the rest of their sceptical companions: “what kind of help can you give us?”, one of them asked me. While discussing my presence there, on the other side of the road the police switched

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<sup>13</sup> Field notes, 03/04/2015.

on the sirens and stopped in front of us, in their routinely attempts to control the area and impede migrants from running towards the opposite port fences: “This happens every day”, a migrant reassured me<sup>14</sup>.

Once my presence in the factory became more regular, the relationship with migrants mitigated, although their elevated turnover represented a constant challenge in terms of personal and professional outcomes. During weekdays, I could enter the Ladopoulos factory from the main gate in Akti Dimaion, disguising my presence among the numerous private citizens that every day go to the municipal offices. In the early afternoon, with the offices closed and the police patrolling the external coastal road, the lateral exit fronting onto the theatre forecourt would constitute – even for migrants – a valid stratagem to avoid nuisances. In the weekends, though, the factory remained inaccessible and dangerous, due to the closure of the main gate and the continuous police patrols around it.

As for the other factories, from spring onwards I intensified and regularised my visits, building more solid relationships with migrants. In May 2015, I began to collect the first semi-structured interviews with migrants; by that time, however, I had also gathered a great number of information and stories through informal encounters and conversations, thanks to the strategic position I had chosen to settle in and the continuous “walkscapes” I had made. My research interests were less related to their past lives in their countries of origin, than to their journeys to and settlement in Patras. My questions concerned their arrival into Greece, their potential experience with the asylum system, their desired destinations, and their everyday life in the factories, with particular focus on their internal organisation, their daily activities, and their attempts to cross the border.

By the end of the fieldwork, I had collected 18 semi-structured interviews with Sudanese and Afghan migrants, together with about 20 informal encounters, conversations, and interviews from which I could reconstruct most of the information I needed (see Table 4). The regular strolls along the port area allowed me to run across migrants and engage in informal conversations on an almost daily basis. These encounters constituted a valid method to make myself known and visible among the migrant population that, due to sudden departures and continuous arrivals, could have changed quite frequently. As for life in the factories, I employed a moderate participant observatory method, which let me interact with the migrants in the field,

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<sup>14</sup> Field notes, 28/06/2015.

observe and question them about their daily life, and participate in their moments of gathering.

MIGRANTS				
NAME - NATIONALITY	DATE	DURATION	LOCATION	TYPE
M.T., 25, Afghanistan	15.02	10m	Gates of AVEX	IC
	16.02	40m	Momento Café	IC
	25.03	10m	Gates of AVEX	IC
	02.04	30m	AVEX	IC
	03.04	4h	AVEX	IC
	02.05	1h	AVEX	IC
	03.05	1h	AVEX	SSI
	30.05	1h	AVEX	IC
	04.06	1h	AVEX	IC
	11.06	30m	AVEX	IC
A., 40, Sudan	15.02	30m	Sudanese shelters	II
T., 25, Saudi Arabia	15.03	1h 30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	29.03	45m	Venizelou - Akti Dimaion	IC
	16.04	30m	New Port Park	IC
	09.05	30m	VESO	IC
A., 37, Yemen	15.03	30m	VESO	IC
	01.06	1h	VESO	IC
	05.06	20m	VESO	IC
	18.06	1h	VESO	II
	18.07	30m	VESO	IC
	20.07	1h 30m	VESO	II
	24.07	30m	VESO	IC
	27.07	1h	VESO	IC
	28.07	1h	VESO	IC
M.M., 36, Sudan	16.03	15m	Along Akti Dimaion	IC
	28.06	30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	29.06	1h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	SSI
	07.07	10m	Venizelou - Akti Dimaion	IC
H., 28, Afghanistan	03.04	1h	AVEX	IC
	17.06	30m	AVEX	IC
	21.07	30m	Ladopoulos	IC
B., Sudan	15.04	20m	Venizelou - Akti Dimaion	IC
	05.06	15m	VESO	IC
	06.06	1h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	20.06	1h 30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	II
	21.06	1h	Outside Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	23.06	2h	Outside Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	25.06	2h	Outside Peiraiki-Patraiki	II
	29.06	30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	12.07	1h 30m	VESO	IC
	22.07	20m	VESO	IC
	24.07	1h	VESO and Akti Dimaion	IC
	27.07	1h	VESO	IC
	03.08	1h	VESO	IC
	06.08	1h	VESO	IC
A.M., 39, Sudan	18.04	1h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	01.05	2h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	09.05	1h 30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	SSI

O.S., 30, Sudan	18.04	2h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	12.06	1h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	SSI
A., 26, Sudan	23.05	1h 30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	SSI
	25.05	1h 30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	31.05	1h 30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	01.06	30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	05.06	1h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	06.06	1h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	07.06	30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
	14.06	1h30m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	IC
A.R., 23, Afghanistan	30.05	1h	AVEX	SSI
	01.06	30m	AVEX	IC
	04.06	1h	AVEX	IC
	11.06	30m	AVEX	IC
	16.06	1h	AVEX	IC
	19.06	30m	AVEX	IC
	26.06	30m	AVEX	IC
	28.06	30m	AVEX	IC
A.M.A., 34, Sudan	31.05	1h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	SSI*
A.L., 21, Afghanistan	01.06	45m	AVEX	SSI*
R.M., 20, Sudan	01.06	1h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	SSI*
A.A.I., 27, Sudan	01.06	1h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	SSI*
A., 15, Afghanistan	05.06	1h	AVEX	SSI*
T.O., 33, Sudan	06.06	45m	Peiraiki-Patraiki	SSI*
A.A.A., 35 Sudan	07.06	1h	Peiraiki-Patraiki	SSI*
J.H., 15, Afghanistan	13.06	1h	AVEX	SSI*
A.S., 35, Sudan	21.06	1h	Outside Peiraiki-Patraiki	SSI*
A.H., 24, Afghanistan	26.06	1h	AVEX factory	SSI*
A., Afghanistan	14.07	45m	Ladopoulos	II
A., 22, Afghanistan	20.07	1h	Ladopoulos	IC
F., Afghanistan	20.07	1h 30m	Ladopoulos	II
A., 20, Afghanistan	20.07	1h	Ladopoulos	IC
	21.07	30m	Ladopoulos	IC
	22.07	1h	Ladopoulos	IC
	28.07	1h 30m	Ladopoulos	II
	30.07	1h	Ladopoulos	IC
Anonymous, 25, Afghanistan	21.07	45m	Ladopoulos	II
	04.08	1h	Ladopoulos	II
M., Sudan	22.07	45m	VESO	II
A.T., Afghanistan	22.07	30m	Ladopoulos	IC
	29.07	45m	Ladopoulos	IC
	03.08	1h 30m	Ladopoulos	II
H., 35, Afghanistan	25.07	30m	AVEX	IC
	30.07	20m	AVEX	IC
	01.08	30m	AVEX	IC
O., 21, Afghanistan	27.07	30m	Ladopoulos	IC
	29.07	1h 30m	Ladopoulos	II
A.S., Afghanistan	27.07	1h 30m	Ladopoulos	II
	29.07	1h	Ladopoulos	IC
	04.08	15m	Ladopoulos	IC
	06.08	1h	Ladopoulos	IC
Anonymous, Afghanistan	31.07	45m	Ladopoulos	II
Anonymous, Afghanistan	31.07	30m	Ladopoulos	II

Table 4: Non-comprehensive list of migrants encountered in the factories.

Legend: IC informal conversation; II informal interview; SSI semi-structured interview; \* with translator.

While I was trying to collect interviews, I nonetheless encountered several difficulties. The most evident was the temporary opening of the border with North Macedonia, which made many migrants opt for the Balkan route to reach northern European countries, rather than risking their lives sneaking under a lorry. With the burst of the so-called “migrant crisis”, in early summer 2015 Macedonian and Greek authorities agreed to open their borders and let migrants pass through the Balkans and up to northern Europe. This unexpected situation made dozens of migrants leave Patras, in order to carry their journey through the Balkans. While in February 2015 there were, according to their own reconstruction, about 150 migrants scattered among the various factories, in summer their number shrank to about 50, and in September there were probably just a couple of dozen people. This, of course, complicated the possibility to obtain interviews: with the summer passing by, there were always fewer people to talk to.

Language represented another difficulty. The majority of migrants could not speak English so fluently to sustain an interview or even a conversation. This problem limited quite significantly the number of people I could interview. At the beginning, I could count on one or two people inside each factory that could have helped me translate the conversations with the interviewees. However, their presence in the factories was always precarious and subjected to their availability: some of them either went through the Balkans, managed to sneak under a lorry and reach Italy, or needed to go to Athens for quite some time to renew their documents. At AVEX, for example, since July 11, 2015 and for the rest of the fieldwork, I had no chances to interview any person whomsoever, as the “translator” that was helping me managed to clandestinely embark on a ferryboat to Venice.

Diffidence and insecurity constituted the third problem. Despite the fact that I had visited the different camps quite regularly since the beginning of my fieldwork, it was difficult to gain some people’s confidence. Even my explanations and reassurances on how data and information would have been used were not enough to convince some of them to be interviewed. In one case, even the person that assisted me in translating conversations refused to grant a formal recorded interview, even though he had already provided me with plenty of information about himself and his situation in Greece during our previous informal conversations. Given the voluntary participation of migrants to the interviews, this behaviour was perfectly comprehensible, although it limited the number of interviewees.

## 1.4 Action

Border studies, as several other disciplines, could not have been immune to the numerous transformations brought about by neoliberal globalisation: new epistemological paradigms emerged, challenging the traditional standpoints that had dominated in previous decades. Chapter 2 will delve into the border studies literature, examining the conceptual and analytical evolution of borders in relation to migration and mobility. It will critically analyse the main theoretical approaches on borders, evaluating their main contributions, commonalities, and shortcomings. Evaluating that none of such approaches can capture the complexity and multiplicity of processes unfolding across the port/border area of Patras, the chapter will argue that borders can be better conceived as “meeting points” where all these theoretical connotations and distinctions unfold and intertwine.

Without losing sight of the geopolitical and socio-economic processes unfolding at global and European level, chapter 3 will examine the development of border management in Europe since the advent of neoliberal globalisation. It will do so by looking not only at global migratory flows and their implications for the process of European re-bordering, but also at their intertwining relations with the deepening and widening of the European common market (Hudson 2003, 2004; Wissel and Wolff 2017). The combined dispositions of Schengen and Dublin Conventions have created, I argue with Lefebvre (1991), a homogeneous-yet-fractured European space, where capital, commodities, and certain categories of people can travel in a relatively unbounded manner, while a wide array of visible and less visible bordering procedures are put in place to regulate the mobility of undesirable people.

Formally part of the EU but located at its geopolitical margins, Greece had to strengthen the security measures within and along its external borders<sup>15</sup>, but also to take responsibility for the examination of the asylum claims lodged by those applicants that had purportedly set foot in Greece as their first European country of entry (Papadopoulou 2004). Greece has become a country of passage for a minority of migrants that eschew the victimisation/criminalisation dichotomy (Squire 2017) by clandestinely escaping to other European destinations. Due to the peculiar European and national logistical developments regulating the access and circulation of capital, goods, and migrants within the Greek territory, the port/border area of Patras has

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<sup>15</sup> The external borders of Greece at that time coincided entirely with those of the EU.

disclosed its highly uneven and controversial configurations through history, turning from an important hub that fostered the agricultural and industrial sectors to a pass-through node for commercial and migrant mobilities. The last part of the chapter will be precisely dedicated to the analysis of the socio-economic development of Patras, from its historical relationship with the sea and its surroundings to its contemporary evolution in the framework of the European common market.

The following three chapters will be dedicated to the analysis of field data, with particular emphasis to the processes of neoliberalism, securitisation, and migrants' autonomy, respectively, in producing and configuring the port/border area of Patras. As I argue, neoliberalism can be considered the driver for the geopolitical, logistical, and architectural transformations of the port, producing its own spatialities and temporalities for the development of capitalist relations – yet, not without contestations and conflicts. Securitisation measures and migration policies, which operate to control and filter mobilities, create and mould their contradictory-seeming yet mutually interrelated spatio-temporal relations. Often concealed or invisible, migrants build every day their own spaces and times, although sometimes reproducing internal contradictions. These chapters, therefore, should be conceived neither as hermetically sealed compartments, nor as the mere description of uniform or homogeneous processes. Rather, they would be better thought of as a dialectical negotiation between the different processes that produce and shape the port/border area of Patras, with their relations, discrepancies, and struggles.

In particular, chapter 4 will focus on the examination of border connections, i.e. the multifarious economic and logistical networks that have traversed and continuously reconfigured Greece and Europe over the last 30 years, in the framework of the neoliberal transformation of the European common market. The chapter will look at the evolution of the port of Patras and of the surrounding road and rail networks within the TEN-T project, highlighting not only the uneven development of the region, but also the burst of changes and conflicts on the ground. In the 1990s, the port experienced indeed a tremendous increase in transit traffic, due to the scarce road connections around the northern port of Igoumenitsa and the burst of the Yugoslav Wars, which hindered the logistical networks through northern Greece and most of the Balkan Peninsula. By the time of the expansion and construction of the new port, however, geopolitical and logistical changes had provoked a significant reduction in the transit traffic through the port, with numerous repercussions and struggles at local

level. While looking at the historical process through which neoliberalism has developed, the chapter will also explore the specific spatio-temporal development of the port/border area of Patras and its peculiarity as a meeting point of different and at times contrasting dynamics. It will argue, therefore, that those epistemological approaches analysing the political-economic forces underlying the formation and development of borders necessarily fail to grasp more situated and grounded practices.

Chapter 5 will look at the role and changes of securitisation measures in the port/border area of Patras, examining in particular their close entanglement with neoliberal practices. Whereas neoliberalism aims at dismantling borders for the faster and unbounded circulation of capital, goods, and workers, securitisation processes tend to erect borders and intensify mechanisms of control and surveillance, for the secure unfolding of those same flows and networks. This chapter will raise two interrelated arguments. It maintains that a focus on securitisation *per se*, although useful to grasp certain dynamics, is not sufficient to capture the complexity of the processes intersecting at and across borders. The process of securitisation of borders needs instead to be comprehended within the vaster “operations of capital” (Mezzadra and Neilson 2015) under which they are subsumed, analysing the differential mobility that borders enable. By the same token, the process of border enforcement cannot be considered in isolation, but rather in relation with a whole series of policies and regulations at European, national, and multilateral level that govern the differential inclusion and circulation of migrant mobilities from their countries of origin. The construction of the border and migration regime in Greece should thus look at the variegated assemblage of policies, dispositions, and mechanisms that constantly creates, multiplies, and relocates borders; governs and disciplines the mobilities outside, within, and across them; and regulates entrances to, and departures from, the European territory.

After examining the intertwining and conflicting forces of neoliberalism and securitisation, chapter 6 will analyse a third moment of the production of borders, i.e. the potential constitution of a migrant subjectivity and its struggle against the European border and migration regime. After tracing the history of the abandoned factories and the multiple threads that their dissolution has left uncovered since today, the chapter will look at how the mobility of migrants constantly defies the dominant practices of containment and disrupts the logistical circulation of licit people and goods on a daily basis. It will do so through the analysis of the challenges that

migrants' routes pose to the institutionalised geographies of admission, detention, and deportation that regulate the standard path towards asylum at European and national level. By shedding light on the reproduction of class, race, and gender divisions among migrants, the chapter will also criticise those epistemological approaches that tend to place excessive emphasis on the political role and unity of agential struggles in determining the shift and strengthening of the mechanisms of securitisation, thus overlooking the multiple relations and negotiations occurring at and across borders between a multiplicity of social processes and forces.

Following theoretical and empirical analyses, the research will eventually argue that borders can be better conceived as epistemological and practical "meeting points", where a multiplicity of processes continuously interact and negotiate. Far from being predetermined and homogeneous, these processes constantly engage with each other and confront the surrounding environment, in a continuous dialectics of connections, contestations, and resistances that produce and shape socio-spatial relations at and across borders. With its uneven and peculiar historical developments, the port/border area of Patras is but one of the possible meeting points: here, the process of neoliberalism and its ceaseless attempt to establish connections and networks across borders, the European single market with its contrasting compulsions on openness and restrictions, and the border struggles engendered by migrants transiting through the city continuously shape its spatio-temporal configurations on an everyday basis. The research will therefore invite border scholars to bring their epistemological approaches on the materiality of the border, in order to grasp the multifarious, intertwining, and sometimes conflictual relations occurring at and across border places.

## 2 Border theories

Despite the ideological construction and affirmation of borders as the form of a kind of enclosure, therefore, they are operative primarily as equivocal sites or amorphous zones of permeability, perforation, transgression, and thereby, encounter and exchange.

Nicholas De Genova 2013, *'We are of the connections': migration, methodological nationalism, and 'militant research'*

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will revisit and critically assess the main theoretical approaches on borders, analysing their commonalities and divergences, as well as their advantages and shortcomings in capturing the multiplicity of processes that define and traverse them. The examination of the conceptual, epistemological, and ontological evolution of borders in border studies constitutes neither a mere stylistic exercise, nor an elementary necessity to enumerate or catalogue them, as if they were separate and mutually exclusive entities. Rather, it is deemed necessary to evaluate the capability of the different border theories in considering and explaining the role of, and interactions between, the various multi-scalar dynamics that produce and constantly modify – while being produced and modified by – borders, in order to eventually outline and define the idea of borders as “meeting points”.

The chapter will start by making two interrelated presuppositions. First, any endeavour to reconstruct an exhaustive analysis of the theoretical approaches on borders, or even more so to extrapolate a grand theory of border, is not only bound to remain partial and incomplete, but also practically problematic or undesirable (Newman 2006a; C. Johnson et al. 2011). Some border scholars have embarked on such adventure, with the purpose of classifying and systematising a wide array of perspectives and theories (see for example Kolossov 2005; Diener and Hagen 2009; Wilson and Donnan 2012a). Although providing valid perspectives to critically analyse borders and their manifestations, similar reconstructions run the risk of *bordering* the field of border studies itself, introducing the different sets of theoretical approaches as separated containers.

Besides, borders – this is the second presupposition – are complex and variegated institutions that can scarcely be encapsulated through prefabricated or isolated theoretical approaches. Talking of and about borders might raise a myriad of other correlated issues, such as state sovereignty and cosmopolitanism, structure and agency, inclusion and exclusion, labour and securitisation, citizenship and identity, us and them. Such issues do not necessarily entail dichotomous or disconnected relations

among and within each other, but rather a multiplicity of combinations, networks, and struggles that continuously overlap and are reconfigured across borders, adding further layers of complexity to the analysis of borders itself.

After critically examining the different epistemological perspectives on borders, the chapter argues that, while each border theory can advance a particularly valuable and favourable point of view for the interpretation of certain aspects related to borders, none of them, considered singularly, can provide a comprehensive-yet-grounded analysis of borders. By shedding light on the benefits and limitations that each epistemological angle upholds, this work will advocate the necessity of adopting a different gaze for the study of borders, in order to capture the multiplicity and complexity of the processes that intersect at and across them.

Rather than starting from a ready-made theoretical perspective, the research will take the border as a starting point for a critical assessment of the different epistemological positions and of the multiple processes intersecting across them. It will analyse, in particular, two works that already attempted to conceive the border as a point of departure for a wider examination of border processes: Mezzadra and Neilson's "Border as Method" (2013) and Rumford's idea of "Seeing like a border" (2014a). Through the critical examination of these works, similar in their way of employing a different gaze to look *at* and *from* the border, yet radically divergent in their outcomes, the research will construct the concept of borders as "meeting points". Such concept, it is argued, might help capture and analyse the complex intermingling of neoliberalism, securitisation, and migrants' autonomy at and across borders, with particular attention to the connective and conflictual relations they craft.

Building upon the different border theories, the idea of borders as "meeting points" aims to find the most practical instruments to assess borders and their multifarious proliferation, seeking to explain the complex and variegated social processes that unfold at and across borders. Although acknowledging its limitations and partiality, the concept of borders as "meeting points" proposes some tenets that, drawing from different epistemological approaches, could help kick off a fruitful yet critical dialogue across contrasting positions. In so doing, it attempts to overcome the limits of border studies, caught either in thinking about the issue of borders as a history of interstate capitalist relations with indistinct repercussions on the ground, or in looking at situated practices that neglect the political economy of the European border and migration regime.

## 2.2 Borders as “lines in the sand”

Like any other object of study, “boundaries are related to their historical and geographical milieu” (S. B. Jones 1959:241). At the turn of the XX century, borders were conceived as natural or artificial barriers that delimited a well-defined territory, protecting its population from external attacks (Prescott 1990). Whether drawn in the aftermaths of imperial conquests or the result of the formation of new nation states, borders “are indeed the razor’s edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations... Just as the protection of the home is the most vital care of the private citizen, so the integrity of her borders is the condition of existence of the State” (Curzon 1907:7). Such conceptualisation of borders entails numerous intertwining issues, related in particular to the survival and development of nation states and their populations.

Already in earlier texts, important distinctions between the concepts of border (or boundary) and frontier could be visible (see Kristof 1959), although in reality they appeared blurred or overlapping. During a historical phase characterised by a colonial “scramble for land” to expand the *lebensraum* of nation states and their populations (see W. D. Smith 1980; Abrahamsson 2013), the frontier represented not just the peripheral areas of nation states, but a political and socio-cultural space that should have continuously stretched towards the outside and incorporated new territories. As Kristof wrote (1959:270), the frontier was not (just) a legal or political concept, but “a phenomenon of ‘the facts of life’ – a manifestation of the spontaneous tendency for growth of the ecumene”. Often drawing from Darwin’s theory of evolutionism, certain accounts would regard the emptiness of ancestral lands and the backwardness of primitive societies as a profitable occasion for the European powers to solve their biological needs of territorial expansion (see Brigham 1919; S. B. Jones 1959).

Borders were instead generally conceived as “strict lines of separation” (Brigham 1919:202) whose fundamental aim was to demarcate national territories or sanction colonial occupations. Among anthropologists and political geographers, often diplomatically or militarily embedded in the campaigns of their respective governments, borders were mostly thought of as important instruments that delimited a certain space and defined the population living within them, at least until new territorial conflicts urged to reconfigure socio-spatial territories. As such, they were often the attentive result of agreements and treaties between nation states, requiring

“due regard to local conditions of topography and the will of the peoples who are thus to have a barrier placed between them” (Holdich 1916:422).

Although natural boundaries were still considered to maintain certain defensive mechanisms against external invasions and reproduce an intrinsic partition between territories and populations (Holdich 1916; see also Fawcett 1918; Pounds 1951), artificial and human demarcations were gradually complementing or supplanting the natural ones when the latter no longer sufficed (Curzon 1907). For some, such “an artificial impress on the surface of the land... must adapt itself to the topographical conditions of the country it traverses” in order to guarantee a certain degree of protection (Holdich 1916:424), while for others “the feature used for the frontier should be one where men naturally meet – which is not on waterpartings and mountain crests” (Lyde 1915:128). Whether promoting encounters or fomenting conflicts, the idea of border at the beginning of XX century carried with it an inevitable role of national protection, security from external threats, and internal development: “it must be obvious, indisputable, a promoter of relations in peace and a barrier in war” (Brigham 1919:204; see also Spykman 1942).

The reading of these earlier texts may sometimes disclose pleasant surprises about certain issues that are so much in vogue in contemporary border studies. Writing in the midst of WWI, Lyde (1915:139; see also Minghi 1963) convened that boundaries should promote peaceful international relations, in particular through the patient and collaborative work that the people operating on the border have learnt and practised on the ground vis-à-vis the remote work perpetrated by “the patriarchal machinist trained within telephone reach of the headquarters of the Government machine”. Some years later, Boggs (1932:48, in R. Jones 2009:181) regretted that “studies of the principles of boundary making have hitherto been confined, unfortunately, almost wholly to international boundaries”. In the same period, the American geographer Richard Hartshorne (1933:199) argued for the need to research on the areas touched by international boundaries and on the population that inhabited those areas, “rather than those in the internal areas of the states who are most to be considered in studying or locating boundaries”. Besides, he invited to pay particular attention to “the *associations*, of all kinds, of the different parts of the border area with each of the bordering states” (*ibid.*, his emphasis). In a similar manner, Spykman (1942:437) defined the boundary “not only [as] a line of demarcation between legal systems but also [as] a point of contact of territorial power structures”.

Albeit imbued with colonial or racial problematics, some of the threads and discussions animating earlier debates on borders have propagated heretofore, inaugurating a new line of enquiry that was soon about to expand the boundaries of knowledge (R. Jones 2009). However, as numerous studies showed (Lyde 1915; Hartshorne 1936; S. B. Jones 1943), the study of borders was still limited to the conceptualisation, classification, and categorisation of international boundaries (Newman 2006b). As Hartshorne posited (1933:199, his emphasis), the “original, primary function of boundaries... [is] to *bound*, i.e. to determine the limiting line on the earth’s surface on one side of which all men and things are subject to the jurisdiction of one state, whereas the moment that line is crossed everything is subject to another state”.

Although noting a shift towards a functional approach to border studies (Newman 1998, 2006b; Grundy-Warr and Schofield 2005; Kolossov 2005), the idea of the border as a territorial marker between political entities has endured without significant changes throughout the following decades, arguably for being “a period of exceptionally stable borders by the general standards of twentieth-century Europe... [where] the practical importance of state borders reached its zenith” (O’Dowd 2002:16). In remarking on the relevance of borders for the stability and security of nation states, Kristof noted how “‘Boundary’ is a term appropriate to the present-day concept of the state, that is, the state as a sovereign (or autonomous) spatial unit, one among many” (1959:270). Given that “The phenomenon called the ‘state’ has been accepted... as the formal or central subject matter of political geography” (Jackson 1958:178), the border as object of study slowly passed into oblivion until the 1980s (Newman 2006a; Diener and Hagen 2009), obscured by static conceptions of borders.

Despite the transformations that neoliberal globalisation has entailed for nation states and their borders, the “territorialist epistemology” (Lapid 2001) has influenced even subsequent studies on borders. The multiplication of borders and their variegated manifestations throughout society have prompted Parker and Vaughan-Williams (2009, 2012) to call for a new agenda for critical border studies which abandons the longstanding idea of borders as “lines in the sand” and manages instead “to extrapolate new border concepts, logics, and imaginaries that capture the changing perspective on what borders are supposed to be and where they may be supposed to lie” (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009:583). The revival of border studies after the 1980s, in fact, has not seemed to go towards that direction.

### 2.3 A borderless world?

The idea of a world devoid of borders or, at least, with a diminished significance of their geopolitical and socio-economic role has been present even in periods when the defence or expansion of territorial borders was a vital issue for many nation states. In the aftermath of WWI, Brigham (1919:202) envisaged an ideal stage of world development where autonomous nation states could cultivate amicable relations with their neighbours and mutually benefit from economic cooperation: “Under such ideal conditions international lines would be little more than our bounds of states, counties and towns”. In his analysis of travel and communication speed- and cost-maps, Boggs (1941:128) lamented that the

“devices and techniques that are transforming human environment... vastly increase the distance at which any corporate body or any nation may operate economically and efficiently. ... [However, such] instrumentalities that are being so effectively used for brutalitarian ends must be adapted to humanitarian objectives and a world economy”.

Similarly, in his reading of Boggs’ 1940 masterpiece on international boundaries, Minghi notes how the American geographer already conceived boundaries “as barriers to economic intercourse with their ‘almost unimaginable multiplicity of restrictions’” (Boggs 1940:13, in Minghi 1963:410).

The global geopolitical configuration after WWII, as discussed before, not only weakened the interest in the study of borders but also dampened the enthusiasms for a borderless world. It is only with the socio-economic and geopolitical changes brought about by the advent of neoliberal globalisation that there has been a resurgence in border studies, whose echo resounds to this day. As Newman puts it (2006a:146), such renovated interest in border studies was “both discipline- and place-specific”. Drawing from the ascent of disciplines like business and management studies, the first reconsiderations on the role of borders reflected not only the particular optimism throughout the western world, but also the interest of peculiar actors, like transnational corporations and financial stakeholders.

The advent of neoliberal globalisation and the subsequent reconfiguration of the political, economic, and social world order inaugurated what has been ironically defined as a period of “*endisms* (the end of history, geography, nature, ideology), *postisms* (postmodern, post-industrial, postcapitalist) and *beyondisms* (beyond the nation-state, beyond the cold war)” (Newman and Paasi 1998:193; their emphasis).

Some scholars provocatively asserted the premature demise of the nation state, celebrating the widening of transnational corporations' horizons and the rise of regional economies within an increasingly borderless world (Ohmae 1990, 1996). Others ventured so far as to predict the "end of geography", as a result of the global financial integration and the consequent annihilation of spatial distances (O'Brien 1992). Given the particular historical conjuncture following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the advancement of liberal market-driven ideas and policies, still others proclaimed "the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (Fukuyama 1989:4).

For these authors, the growing power of transnational corporations and international or regional organisations, as well as their influence on governments' decision-making authorities, are an unequivocal proof of the progressive loss of state sovereignty (Camilleri and Falk 1992). The growing exposure of national economies to the widening and accelerating interconnections at global level, their argument goes, has rendered states increasingly susceptible to international actors, thus undermining their role. Following this line of reasoning, states can no longer be considered as the sole "containers" of social and economic life, as they have gradually been deprived of their functions to the benefit of transnational corporations, regional and international institutions, and even global cities, which have emerged as competitive players in the world market (see Sassen 2001).

Such conclusions appear, at best, overhasty and inaccurate. The idea of a borderless world has been widely contested for lack of critical analysis among border scholars, aware of the fact that "There are more international borders in the world today than ever there were before" (Wilson and Donnan 2012b:1; see also O'Dowd 2002, 2010; Vaughan-Williams 2009; R. Jones and Johnson 2014). Borders, as Balibar later argues (2002:81), "do not have the same meaning for everyone", thus producing relational and differentiated mobilities. The extraordinary improvements in transport and telecommunication systems have facilitated the international mobility of certain categories of people, such as businessmen, scholars, private and public functionaries, and tourists, although restricting the freedom of movement for others, namely destitute migrants and refugees.

Also critical globalisation theorists (Brenner 1999a, 1999b, 2004; Brenner et al. 2003b) have harshly criticised the idea of a borderless world. The territorial rescaling

of political and economic state functions towards sub- and supra-national organisations has inevitably had consequences on the reconfiguration of states' decisional and operational functions. However, this process has not translated into an utter loss of sovereignty, but rather to a re-regulation of states' space of action and to a transformation of their territorial reorganisation (Brenner 2004). Despite many writings and ideas about the retreat of states and the erosion of their sovereignty in relation to the transnational forces of economic globalisation, "States remain important global actors in world markets, in the moral-political discourse of international human rights, and in a variety of international and transnational relations governed by Realpolitik. [In addition] states remain a, if not *the* crucial emblem of political belonging and political protection" (W. Brown 2010:67, her emphasis).

In order to grasp and analyse such transformations, a more informed and critical enquiry about state spatiality should reject any naturalised, unchanging, and pre-given geographical assumptions associated with traditional analyses of the national territorial state, focusing instead on "the ongoing production of new state spaces at various geographical scales and territorial sites around the world" (Brenner et al. 2003a:11). The new socio-spatial configurations of nation states should be investigated as an ongoing, never predetermined nor fixed process engendered by the complex interactions, negotiations, and even conflicts between structural forces and social agents, accounting for the different historical and geographical developments in different situated scenarios (Jessop, Brenner, and M. Jones 2008).

The "borderless world" became more an object of desire that certain scholars and institutions have aspired to reach, or a policy to pursue in the long run, than an accurate analysis of contemporary society. Drawing from neoclassical economics, some scholars have advocated the reduction or elimination of barriers to labour mobility, in order to reach a better equilibrium in the global labour market by reducing wage gaps, demographic imbalances, and differences in factor endowment between countries (Pritchett 2006, 2010; Clemens 2011). Through unrestrained labour mobility, developed countries, characterised by capital-intensive productive structures, could employ (relatively inexpensive) labour force and alleviate the socio-economic constraints that demographic stagnation exercises on their welfare systems (particularly on the sustainability of pension regimes). Labour-intensive developing economies could instead solve their chronic problems of unemployment and population growth by reducing social and demographic pressures and benefiting from

future remittances (K. Anderson and Winters 2008; Ratha, Mohapatra, and Scheja 2011). Just as the unrestricted circulation of capital, goods, and services under neoliberal globalisation has boosted the global economy, their argument goes, so the unfettered mobility of people would regulate the worldwide mechanisms of demand and supply of labour, levelling out economic disparities between nation states and increase global wealth (Pritchett 2006; Clemens 2011; Clemens and Pritchett 2016).

Despite its appeal to international organisations aiming at reducing global poverty through the expansion of market principles (see World Bank 2005; OECD 2012), such approach reveals several shortcomings. First, it fails to understand the historical and structural causes underlying migration movements: in explaining international migration just in terms of wage gaps and imbalances in the factors of production, it overlooks not only the historical relations between countries, but also a wide array of structural conditions, personal factors, and social networks that prompt people to migrate in the first place. Besides, it neglects the actual role of states in managing and channelling migratory flows, through the selective in/exclusion of certain categories of people.

## **2.4 Borders as social constructions**

### *From borders to b/ordering*

The global and European geopolitical changes had important repercussions not only on nation states and their borders, but also on the way borders themselves could be conceived and analysed. Even in border studies, new epistemological paradigms have emerged, which paid more attention to the indeterminacy and the unexplored, the moment and the everyday, the self and the other. A whole range of disciplines has come into play in order to capture and critically examine the modification and proliferation of borders: border studies are no longer just a matter for international relation theorists and political scientists, but also for sociologists, anthropologists and geographers, contributing with new epistemological and ontological conceptions.

On the one hand, political geography has continued to guide certain research strands on borders. Following the old threads of borders as points of contact and encounter (see Lyde 1915; Spykman 1942), particular interest has been dedicated to the study of borderlands as differentiated but interconnected regions (House 1980; Prescott 1990; Rumley and Minghi 1991). The gradual transformation of the EU, with the deepening and widening of the supra-national institutional project (Hudson 2003,

2004) and the mushrooming of sub-national socio-economic and politico-cultural programs, has sparked a renovated interest in borders and their significance (Paasi 1999; Van Houtum 2000; M. Jones and Paasi 2013), fostering research developments in cross-border cooperation and regional integration (see Blatter 1997; J. W. Scott 2000, 2005; Wastl-Walter and Kofler 2000; Perkmann 2003). Challenging the rhetoric of the “borderless world”, these works conceive borders as spatial configurations where multi-scalar institutions and agents enact a process of re-territorialisation of socio-political and economic functions.

On the other hand, the idea of borders as socio-spatial manifestations continuously reworked through multi-scalar processes of de- and re-territorialisation gradually opened up new epistemological and ontological ways to look at borders, putting under critical enquiry the deterministic vision that had conceived them as natural, inherent, and immutable features of contemporary society (Newman and Paasi 1998; Paasi 1999; Van Houtum 2005). Social constructivists understand globalisation as a continuously contested process forged and performed by a myriad of agents, networks, and discourses, thus involving fragmentation, re-territorialisation, and rescaling, rather than simply homogenisation, de-territorialisation, and relocation of socio-economic institutions and practices (Newman and Paasi 1998; Ó Tuathail 1998; Paasi 1998). As Van Houtum summarises (2000:57), “Although one could argue that the globalization process has enlarged contact possibilities and widened the spatial consciousness of human beings, there is no doubt that countries and borders still exist, and maybe even in a more manifest way than ever before”.

From a social constructivist perspective, the idea of a “borderless world” appears not only reductive, as it falls into the “territorial trap” (Agnew 1994) that maintains the nation state as its analytical unit, but also uncritical, as it fails to assess the constant relocation, proliferation, and multiplication of borders throughout our society. As Paasi puts it (1999:670) “boundaries will be understood not merely as static lines but as sets of practices and discourses which ‘spread’ into the whole of society and are not restricted to the border areas”. In this sense, borders are considered not simply as barriers that impede the movement of goods, capital, and workers, but rather as mobile and fluid social constructs that simultaneously unite and divide territories, creating and shaping identities (Van Houtum 2002a, 2002b; Cooper and Rumford 2011, 2013).

This renovated epistemological framework allows to reinsert a spatial and territorial dimension in the border debate, which the globalisation discourse had

obfuscated. Yet, the emphasis is no longer on reinstating the importance of state peripheral boundaries, but instead on understanding the mental, symbolic, and practical meanings of borders in shaping territories and id/entities, while being shaped by social and political interactions (Van Houtum 2000, 2002a, 2005). Borders remain spatially and historically contingent, and new dimensions emerge through which analysing them: “Even if they [borders] are always more or less arbitrary lines between territorial entities, they may also have deep symbolic, cultural, historical and religious, often contested, meanings for social communities” (Newman and Paasi 1998:187). Rejecting the existence of natural borders, such an approach “focuses on the construction of borders, in other words, how borders are made in terms of its symbols, signs, identifications, representations, performances and stories” (Van Houtum 2005:675).

The role of political geographers alone appeared no longer sufficient to capture the multifarious manifestation of borders and the performance of a wide variety of agents in producing and shaping them. With the development of cultural studies, geographers, anthropologists, and ethnographers have focused on the reproduction of bordering practices through the level of the body, unveiling how ordinary people create borders within and among themselves. Initially attentive to issues and processes of construction of identity, culture, and social relations at and across borders (see Molchanov 1996; Ackleson 1999; Albert, Jacobson, and Lapid 2001; Van Houtum and Lagendijk 2001), this particular research thread has later developed and enriched through feminist critique and intersectional analysis, which have relocated the boundaries of citizenship, ethnicity, and belonging (Gupta and J. Ferguson 1992; Lorber 1999; Anthias 2002; Yuval-Davis 2003).

As research became more grounded, the same concept of border was brought under critical scrutiny, as it was deemed incapable to grasp the social and spatial changes occurring in the process of redefinition of borders both within societies and in border studies. Some authors attempted to overcome these shortcomings by reframing the concept of border in terms of b/ordering (Van Houtum 2002a; Van Houtum, Kramsch, and Zierhofer 2005a), thus highlighting the ongoing process of creation and proliferation of borders across different scales, with different repercussions on policies and people. This shift from borders to b/ordering has allowed researchers and scholars to analyse borders as “dynamic social processes and practices of spatial differentiation” (Brambilla 2015b:15).

Rather than simply delimiting the territory of nation states, borders separate “an inside from an outside, while linking both in a particular way, projecting the imagination of a larger, encompassing reality on the ground” (Van Houtum, Kramsch, and Zierhofer 2005b:3). In the attempt of creating and defending what Benedict Anderson called “imagined communities” (1983), b/ordering continuously reproduces artificial divisions between “us” and “them”, simultaneously constructing and rejecting the “other” through the imposition of controls on its mobility (Van Houtum 2002a). In this way, b/ordering fulfils our intimate desire of protection from (physical or mental) external threats, shaping (our and other) id/entities and reproducing the materiality of territorial borders onto our everyday lives, through constraining and often violent practices (Van Houtum, Kramsch, and Zierhofer 2005a).

Given its attention to the socio-spatial formation of the concepts and practices of territory and identity, the social constructivist approach has increasingly focused on security issues, investigating in particular the process of securitisation within, along, and outside European borders, the changing meanings of national and European borders, and the proliferation of agents, policies, measures and instruments involved in the regulation of mobilities (see, among others, Salter 2004, 2007; Adey 2009; Vaughan-Williams 2010). The same use of the word securitisation rather than the simple noun security epitomises the analytical propensity to concentrate on an ongoing process, which continuously redrafts its techniques and practices in order to respond more efficiently to perceived and real threats while regulating people’s conducts and movements (see Heyman 2009). The theoretical and empirical analysis of processes of re-territorialisation of bordering practices has paved the way to new research areas devoted to the understanding and examination of the modalities of expansion and proliferation of borders.

The social constructivist focus on securitisation has revealed an increasing attention towards an ever-changing process, which is directed towards the defence of social order and a confusedly-defined western identity (Van Houtum 2002a; Dell’Olio 2005; Van Houtum, Kramsch, and Zierhofer 2005a; Condinanzi, Lang, and Nascimbene 2008). In this respect, some scholars have analysed how the task of performing border controls has been delegated to a whole range of actors, from private (air and land carriers) to public companies (universities and hospitals), with the subsequent internalisation of discriminatory and exclusionary practices on the part of ordinary agents (Lahav and Guiraudon 2000; Broeders 2007; Bigo and Guild 2010;

Aas 2011; Fassin 2011). Others have focused on the increasing bureaucratisation of legal and diplomatic procedures, highlighting how European member states have constantly extended the common list of countries whose citizens need a visa to enter Europe (Bigo 2004; Cholewinski 2004), and appointed a growing number of neighbouring and distant states as “safe third countries”, thus allowing the legal expulsion of rejected asylum seekers or irregular migrants (Lavenex 1998).

*From b/ordering to borderwork and borderscapes*

More recent developments in the social constructivist approach to border studies have focused on the necessity of grasping the actions that border subjects perform as they experience, confront, create, or challenge bordering practices. Some border scholars have further evolved the analysis of b/ordering activities, trying to comprehend perceptions, representations, enactments of (and oppositions to) such activities carried out by border subjects. If the work of critical geographers has been particularly important in capturing and analysing where and how borders manifest themselves (C. Johnson et al. 2011; R. Jones and Johnson 2014), anthropologists have been the protagonists of this ontological reconfiguration within border studies. The main question, indeed, is not simply to understand where borders are located or how they reveal themselves, but rather how border subjects live, produce, defy, and react to bordering practices, wherever they are to be found.

A first approach draws from the Balibar notion of the widespread character of borders, focusing on the idea that borders connect, rather than dividing, a multiplicity of actors that are directly and industriously involved in the process of borderwork (Rumford 2008, 2013). Methodologically, this approach invites border scholars to reject a static state-centric vision, suggesting instead that they should “see like a border” in order to grasp the vernacularised process of border-making performed by manifold subjects through everyday practices of connectivity and encounter (Cooper and Rumford 2011; Perkins and Rumford 2013; Rumford 2013). As detailed below, the concept of borderwork is useful in disclosing the situated manifestations of borders and disentangling the manifold roles performed by a wide array of actors in creating and shaping those borders. However, I contend, it guiltily omits to account for the historical and structural conditions that produce borders and bordering practices. In so doing, the connections and encounters unfolding at and across borders

seem to occur in a political and socio-economic void, silencing the potential voices of resistance that borders often generate.

Another research strand, similarly aiming to capture the practices of negotiation, contestation, and resistance enacted by border subjects, has resulted in the coinage of the concept of borderscapes (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007; Brambilla 2015b; Brambilla et al. 2015), which takes other steps away from the “territorialist epistemology” still influencing border studies. Like the borderwork approach, the borderscapes concept analyses the multi-scalar and multifarious manifestations of borders, with particular attention to the role of border subjects in shaping borders. Moreover, it works towards new configurations of political belonging “based on a novel concept of ‘community’ that is (re)defined by giving attention to the fluidity of nation-state borders and the complexity of experiences of those who live in them and/or across them” (Brambilla 2015b:19).

The borderscapes concept does not simply look at borders as places for connectivity and encounters, but delves more deeply into, on the one hand, “the ‘normative dimension’ of the border, that is ... the ethical, legal and empirical premises and arguments used to justify particular cognitive and experiential regimes on which border policies are articulated (what we can call hegemonic borderscapes)” and on the other hand the “multiple strategies of resistance against hegemonic discourses and control practices through which they are exercised (what we can call counter-hegemonic borderscapes)” (*ibid.*:20). The borderscapes concept attempts to grasp both the top-down processes of bordering, implemented by a whole variety of institutional and informal actors at and across different scales, and the bottom-up practices of negotiation, contestation, and resistance that contribute to shape and define borders.

Through the analysis of the different “scapes” that are each time identified (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007; Brambilla 2014), “Borders can be read not only as a di-vision (space of meaning-breaking) but as a space animated by multiple relations, perceptions and perspectives, making it a pluri-vision (zone of plural cultural production and meaning-making)” (Brambilla 2015c:216). This renovated vision through which observing borders represents a peculiar feature of this epistemological turn. As Brambilla (2015b:25) defines it, this new gaze on borders is both kaleidoscopic, as it “is able to grasp the ‘variations’ of borders in space and time, transversally to different social, cultural, economic, legal, and historical settings criss-

crossed by negotiations between a variety of different actors”, and double, since it can capture “the configurations assumed by the border on a small and large scale, globally and locally, ...taking into account not only ‘the big stories’ of the nation-state construction, but also the ‘small stories’ that come from experiencing the border in day-to-day life”.

Given the need and desire to explore grounded practices, a renovated interest for ethnographic research has arisen, often enriched by innovative research methods. More traditional approaches, like archival and desk research, remain nonetheless important to ensure interdisciplinarity (Brambilla 2015b) and grasp the “multidimensional choreography” of borders (Van Houtum 2010a). Significant attention is dedicated to the personal experiences of border subjects and their representations of the border, and, in a wider sense, to the political categories of citizenship and belonging (Yuval-Davis, Anthias, and Kofman 2005; Yuval-Davis 2006a, 2007). Performative and participatory approaches are the preferred methods to collect and understand these experiences and eventually open up “new possible pathways towards novel forms of political participation” (Brambilla 2015b:28).

Social constructivist approaches have had the well-deserved privilege of having unveiled the multi-scalar manifestations of bordering policies and practices, and their uneven repercussions on different territories and subjects. In moving away from the nation state, they have revealed where borders are to be found, which are the institutions enforcing them, and how they operate. Rather than disappearing, borders have extended and expanded within and outside nation states’ boundaries, replicating their meanings and functions through a whole series of procedures, practices, and policies. Such an approach, I argue, allows for more nuanced and grounded analyses of bordering processes and their proliferation throughout society, as it eschews the “territorial trap” of nation states and scrutinises the situated practices of border reproduction.

Although theoretically innovative and empirically grounded, the focus on borders as social constructs seems to overlook those same historical and structural processes that ultimately create and reproduce bordering practices, thus missing a fundamental piece in the border puzzle. Despite the potential attention devoted to both global and local stories, the former are often obscured or undermined in comparison with the latter, thus flattening the spatio-temporal perspective onto a restricted level of analysis. In other words, by focusing on the subjective experiences of the border,

the risk is to lose track of the socio-economic, political, and legal processes that define the conditions of possibility for the production and proliferation of borders throughout society to take place.

## 2.5 A world of borders

In acknowledging the historical developments and the structural forces at the basis of socio-spatial relations, political economy approaches overcome this shortcoming. Drawing from Marxist tradition, these scholars tend to assign borders a prominent importance, as they funnel the flows of capital, goods, and people at the advantage of capitalist states and institutions. In relation to migrant mobilities, borders act as filters for the selective inclusion of labour force within nation states, becoming functional devices that foster capitalist development (Overbeek 2012; Cross 2013; S. Ferguson and McNally 2014).

Within this framework, the concept of “borderless world” is not merely uncritical and ahistorical, but profoundly illogical and practically unrealistic (Wai-Chung Yeung 1998; J. Anderson and Shuttleworth 2004; O’Dowd 2010; J. Anderson 2012). In maintaining the artificial territorial divisions between nation states, borders remain indeed pivotal to capitalism, perpetuating the structural inequalities among them and reinforcing neo-colonial domination in the context of a supposedly global unified market (J. Anderson 2012). In the contemporary political-economic system characterised by “the coexistence of a global economy but many states” (*ibid.*:171), borders allow simultaneously for the unrestricted competition among both transnational corporations and different nation states, the cost-effective circulation of capitals, and the controlled regulation of labour mobility. Here lies, therefore, “a constitutive tension between a re-bordering national security territoriality and a de-bordering geography of participation in open markets and trade networks” (Coleman 2005:189).

In a similar vein, O’Dowd (2010) rehabilitates the central role of state borders within the contemporary debate. In opposition to the utopian idea of a “borderless world” and the overextending metaphor of “bordering”, O’Dowd reconsiders the global primacy of state borders as “the most widely recognised and institutionalised dividers of world space” (*ibid.*:1031). Through the reintegration of “a more reflexive and empirical historical analysis” (1047), the author rejects both the assumption of a post-national world, which tends “to obscure and downgrade [state borders’]

multidimensionality, distinctiveness, and globality” (1032), and the rigid conflation of nation and state, which instead risks falling into a unidimensional, nationalistic, and deterministic view of contemporary social processes. Borders, instead, are still important benchmarks of sovereign powers, as they render states important actors both at a global scale, as no international institution could properly function without them, and at a local level, where they can exert their economic, political, legal, cultural, and military powers (O’Dowd 2010; J. Anderson 2012).

The introduction of a political economy perspective into the analysis of borders does not translate necessarily into a homogenising understanding of social processes. As O’Dowd puts it, “To assert the distinctiveness and global primacy of state borders, therefore, is not to imply that they are natural, immutable, or entirely distinct from other borders” (O’Dowd 2010:1036). Quite the contrary, state borders regulate the intricate and intertwining relationships between market and security imperatives within the context of contemporary capitalist development (see Andreas 1996; Andreas and Snyder 2000; Cunningham and Heyman 2004; Heyman 2004, 2009; Coleman 2005; Sparke 2006). Whereas the former operate for the dismantlement of spatial, socio-economic, and legal barriers in order to facilitate and accelerate commercial exchanges, the latter enforce a whole series of checks, controls, and restrictions to safeguard the correct and secure accomplishment of such exchanges. In this respect, “Every state border, every border region, is unique” (J. Anderson and O’Dowd 1999:594): in the process of its constant expansion, capitalism generates uneven developmental patterns, which require a deeper and more grounded analytical enquiry.

History represents a powerful tool to assess the specificity of every border and the peculiar political-economic conditions at the basis of their evolution. Such specificity is framed not so much in terms of the cultural and ethnic identities that borders construct or that border subjects embody, but more in relation to the variegated territorial projections of capitalist development (O’Dowd 2010). Rather than representing a mere intellectual artifice to embellish the account, historical reconstruction allows social scientists to capture the multiple and interlinked socio-economic, geopolitical, and cultural pathways that have contributed to create and shape nation states’ borders, therefore accounting for the changing significance of borders through time (O’Dowd 2002, 2010).

Within such ontological framework, the analysis of migration movements and patterns “is rooted in modern economic dispossession and in the continual demand for unfree labour, both mediated by the processes and local meanings of capitalist globalisation” (Cross 2013:203). The unequal development of capitalism, further aggravated by neo-imperial processes of “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey 2004), has created the conditions for the mass displacement of millions of people around the world, no longer able to reproduce their subsistence and thus forced to sell their labour power. The constant expansion of capital has pushed the boundaries of the labour market at global level, creating a global reserve army of labour that capital can fully exploit.

The EU constitutes a macroscopic political laboratory where the material transformations of the border become prominent. Borders have not simply disappeared from the European map, but rather moved, shifted, relocated, and modified their functions and meanings. The introduction of the Schengen Agreements in 1985 represented a turning point in this sense. On one hand, “borders are no longer at the border” (Balibar 1998): the post-Schengen EU has allowed every European citizen to travel to, live, and work in any European country, physically abolishing the frontiers and related custom houses between member states. On the other hand, the EU has strengthened its external borders and projected bordering practices outside and within the European territory. Member states have reinforced their supervision over incoming migration flows, asserting their sovereign rights to control their borders and points of entry, determining the subjects that can enter the state territory, and establishing the conditions for border crossing.

A whole series of border controls and migration policies have subsequently been implemented in order to select, channel, and eventually exploit this enormous pool of labour force (S. Ferguson and McNally 2014). From this perspective, securitisation measures have operated a selective differentiation of labour force along the lines of class, gender, race, and nationality. Such distinctions are functional not only “to filter out the undesirable, the unclean and the unworthy” (Munck 2008:1234), but above all to screen and gradually include migrants within the capitalist labour market, through “varying degrees of subordination, rule, discrimination and segmentation” (Mezzadra and Neilson 2012:67). In line with this, migration policies have been constantly shaped according to labour market requirements, deliberately producing vulnerability,

precariousness, and insecurity among the lower sections of the working class (De Genova 2002; S. Ferguson and McNally 2014).

Drawing to some degree from Foucauldian concepts of biopolitics and governmentality<sup>16</sup>, several scholars contend that the target of securitisation measures has progressively shifted from the territory to the population and, in particular, to that segment of population that does not pertain to arbitrarily-established national, race or ethnic criteria (see Walters 2002, 2004, 2012; Amoore 2006; Broeders 2007; Topak 2014). Mechanisms of control constitute not simply tools for state domination over a predefined territory, but rather complex governmental techniques to exert sovereign power over the body of people (see Foucault 2007, 2010). Activities of policing and control intermingle with issues of state authority and power, and the body itself becomes a contested political site over which sovereign authorities enforce their biopolitical control, supervising and disciplining every subject (Broeders 2007; Salter 2008; Adey 2009; Nail 2013).

Like social constructivism, even political economy approaches contemplate a renovated view over borders, as they acknowledge the constant changes in functions and meanings of borders over the past decades. Whereas the former provides a more nuanced analysis of these changes, capturing the multifarious manifestations of borders throughout societies and the numerous actors involved in their implementation, the latter considers state borders as decisive tools functional to the reproduction of capitalist relations and the differential inclusion of exploitable labour force within the countries of the global North. In this respect, the introduction of historical analysis in the study of borders is of paramount importance (O'Dowd 2010), as it allows capturing the consequences of uneven capitalist development in the variety of situated and grounded practices.

Historical analysis, I argue, remains necessary to understand the formation and development of bordering practices through time: in this respect, political economy approaches fill one of the gaps left by social constructivism. However, the threat of “dissolving states and their borders altogether” (*ibid.*:1040) by taking the social constructivist approach to the extremes appears overdone and misleading. It is overdone, as considering the processes at the basis of border creation and proliferation does not necessarily mean excluding history or undermining the importance of borders

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<sup>16</sup> Although Foucault never discussed border or migration issues directly.

(and states) itself. It is misleading as border studies need to move away from state borders and capture the multiplicity of their appearances at and across different scales.

In reconsidering the importance of *state* borders vis-à-vis the analytically empty claims of a borderless world, political-economy thinkers have often fallen into the “territorial trap”, overlooking the continuous and ever-changing proliferation of borders both outside and within the national territory through varying spatial and temporal degrees (Mezzadra and Neilson 2012). Moreover, the emphasis on the political-economic factors underlying the production of borders, although important in capturing the overarching framework of global capitalism, risks undermining the role of migrants in creating and shaping borders: every migrant, from this perspective, is indeed a forced migrant.

In this sense, I suggest that border studies need to account for the multifarious manifestation of bordering practices throughout contemporary societies, wherever they are to be found. This does not mean, however, to accept the Balibar idea of the “everywhere-ness” of borders without criticism. Although Balibar himself is perfectly aware of the constantly versatile and adaptable character of borders through space and time (Balibar 2002), asserting their capillary proliferation through the scattering of mechanisms of security and control would underestimate the role of both structural forces and individual agents in producing, shaping, and altering bordering practices. Historical analysis, I maintain, becomes crucial to detect where such practices arise, ascertain how they develop through time, and assess their specificity, functions, and roles.

## **2.6 Smash the border!**

The Autonomy of Migration (AoM) approach reinstates the primary role of migrant agency in reconfiguring migration patterns and subverting the border and migration regime, adding an unexpected, yet essential, element in the uneven process of capitalist development. Such an approach acknowledges the political-economic forces underlying global capitalism, although it attempts to disentangle structuralist epistemological foundations and create alternative spaces of resistance. Like political economy approaches, AoM theorists recognise the expansive reach of global capitalism – perpetrated through processes of dispossession, exploitation, and accumulation – and the consequent formation of a global reserve army of labour. Like political economy approaches, they are attentive to the changing dynamics of

capitalism, in particular through extractive, financial, and logistical operations (Mezzadra and Neilson 2015), and to the violence they exercise on certain territories and above all on the bodies of migrants. Like political economy approaches, they acknowledge the importance of borders as complex and changing institutions that perpetuate capitalist relations and structural inequalities (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

Yet, it is in the intertwining post-structuralist and postcolonial traditions – emerged with increased intensity since the 1970s as a result of, first, the workerist struggles in advanced capitalist states and, second, the process of decolonisation that led to the independence of African and Asian countries, respectively – that the AoM approach finds its breeding ground. Moving from a radical critique of both the Soviet regime, conceived as totalitarian form of state capitalism, and the official labour movements and parties, which considered work as the constituting factor of human life, workerists envisioned the drive to liberate the subject from the alienation of work as the most authentic and appropriate form of rebellion (Lotringer 2005; Tronti 2010; Bologna 2014). The workerist tradition placed great attention to the (legal and illegal) practices of resistance employed by workers in the factories, from intermittent and dislocated strikes, to mass picketing and sabotages of production. In their view, the workers' struggles and opposition to the Fordist rationalisation of work eventually forced capital to renovate the production system and expand globally (Lotringer 2005).

The field of postcolonial studies developed instead among subaltern scholars determined to speak by and for themselves, as Spivak famously stated (1993; see also Mignolo 2015). Emerged as a way to decolonise and re-appropriate the cultures, minds and languages of ethnic, linguistic, and queer minorities from the suffocating domination of the western white oppressor (see Anzaldúa 1987; Said 1989), postcolonialism put at the centre of attention the open-ended construction and formation of the multiform and variegated identity of the subaltern subject, as well as the complex negotiations and conflicts that such process has historically entailed (Rosaldo 1988). Through situated and grounded analysis, the subaltern subject can acquire consciousness of the hybrid, multifaceted, and mestizo character of his/her own identity, opening up a process of liberation not only from the dominant and patriarchal colonial figure, but also from the capitalist system as a whole (Jenkins and Aitken 2000).

Deeply intertwined with radical feminist and intersectional analyses, post-structuralist and postcolonial approaches placed under critical scrutiny the totalising and rationalistic reason of the modernist era, leading to a deconstruction of positivist thought and structuralist discourse. In border studies, the first steps to think decolonially and act in an epistemically disobedient way (Mignolo 2013) consisted in challenging the modern cartography that reflected the Eurocentric geographies of power, in order to overturn the dominant production of knowledge (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Garelli, Sossi, and Tazzioli 2015; Casas-Cortes et al. 2017). AoM scholars do so by creating new spatial imaginaries, traced through the routes, spaces, and struggles that migrants open up or employ in order to escape border controls, resist the subjugation of everyday life into capitalist mechanisms, and oppose the overexploitation and hyper-precarisation of global labour markets (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). Following and mapping migrants' journeys become "No longer a question of states and borders but a space of events [which accounts for] revolutions, departures, crossings, popular chains, fights, resistances, flights, 'insistences on space', occupations and squats" (Garelli, Sossi, and Tazzioli 2015:168).

Crucial, in this sense, is the way AoM theorists conceive the process of securitisation. Drawing from the Foucauldian idea of circulation, the AoM approach reclaims not only the need for detaching from a methodological nationalism that had contaminated border studies for decades, but also the analytical urgency to conceive securitisation measures as spatio-temporal devices for the selective inclusion of migrants into the capitalist labour market (De Genova 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012, 2013). Migration policies operate accordingly: functional to the requests of global and national capital, they render migrants' lives increasingly more exploitable and precarious, exacerbating their sense of "deportability" (De Genova 2002). Far from simply restricting or hindering migratory flows, the combined implementation of bordering practices, migration policies, and humanitarian interventions *de facto* fosters the circulation of migrants across and within the European territory, regulating the admission, distribution, and disposal of their bodies according to the oscillating requests of capitalist markets (Walters 2006, 2012, 2015a; Tazzioli 2016, 2017a).

Such practices, policies, and interventions, AoM scholars continue, do not operate haphazardly, but enforce class, power, and ethnic distinctions that cut across migrant mobilities (De Genova 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012; Mezzadra 2015). Strictly intertwined with bordering measures, in fact, are differential and relational

mechanisms aiming to sieve, select, and funnel migrant mobilities, facilitating the in/exclusion of migrants into the European labour market. As Balibar reminds us (2002:81), borders have, *inter alia*, a polysemic character, as they “do not have the same meaning for everyone”: borders are meant to screen, hinder, and delay the mobility of certain categories of people, while authorising or accelerating other flows. Despite the appealing sense of impenetrability and security provided by walls, Minca and Rijke argue (2017), borders remain permeable membranes that permit the differential mobility of capital, commodities, and people across them.

Yet, the AoM approach does not consider migrants as passive objects of these measures and policies, but as active political subjectivities that constantly open up new spaces of resistance and trace new trajectories of escape. In so doing, migrants compel border agents to alter continuously their techniques and policies, in order to prevent and deter the multifarious strategies and actions employed by migrants themselves each and every time. As Casas-Cortes et al. (2015:897) put it, “AoM seeks to reinterpret the effects of seeing regular, irregular, transit and other forms of migration as constitutive factors of border policies, architectures, and practices”.

The AoM approach has the undoubted privilege of bringing political agency back to the scene. Whereas the political economy approaches focus on the analysis of the multiplication of bordering practices throughout contemporary society, AoM theorists concentrate their attention on the preponderant role of migrants in creating and shaping their own spatial cartographies and discomposing the hegemonic practices of domination and exploitation. Moreover, unlike social constructivism, they rehabilitate a political character to migrant agency: in focusing on the role of migrants and other actors in performing and experiencing bordering practices, social constructivists tend indeed to depoliticise migration movements, overlooking the structural conditions at the basis of the proliferation of borders.

The AoM represents, I argue, a valid epistemological standpoint to assess the role of migrants in producing and shaping their political subjectivity vis-à-vis the governmental rationalities that would instead discipline and subdue them within the capitalist relations of production. Rather than stumbling into the securitised mechanisms and bureaucratic procedures of mobility control, migrants constantly adopt alternative tactics to eschew the dominant border and migration regime, producing their own alternative cartographies of mobility (Casas-Cortes et al. 2017). Following Tazzioli (2015a:11), “if migrants’ production of spaces means the

enactment of practices of subjectivation and forms of life, it follows that what drives these desires is the possibility of putting into place a different way of acting and relating to oneself and others”.

In conceiving migrants as a unique and unified political subjectivity, the AoM approach nonetheless tends to overlook the differential repercussions that the border and migration regime has on the disposable migrant bodies, and on the reproduction of class, race, and gender divisions among migrants themselves. As Scheel aptly notes (2013:280), the AoM approach is accused “first, of not sufficiently considering the varying conditions under which migration occurs, and second, of downplaying the repressive effects of border controls”, romanticising migration movements and the role of migrants in contesting the capitalist system of border controls and differential inclusion.

Deliberate acts of crossing a fence, sneaking under a lorry, escaping police identification, and occupying abandoned spaces constitute, I argue, political actions that subvert a whole series of migration policies, apparatuses and mechanisms of control aiming to select, filter, and channel the flows, gradually incorporating migrants within the labour market of northern capitalist countries. However, AoM theorists neglect the fact that, the same distinctions of class, race, gender, nationality, and ethnicity that border controls operate are often reproduced among and within migrant groups, making them not only more isolated and atomised, but also more vulnerable to those bordering practices that they yearn for avoiding and circumventing (see Vila 1999). In placing excessive emphasis to the spatial imaginaries that migrants produce, the AoM approach also undermines the historical pathways and relations at the basis of the proliferation of borders, flattening the analysis of worldwide migratory flows on the struggles between migrants and the border regime. In this respect, cartographical representations “reveal little of the historical process of state and nation formation, of its variability, incompleteness, and even failures” (O’Dowd 2010:1036). Albeit important, I add, they overlook the changing trajectories of migration patterns and the reasons underlying them.

## **2.7 Star(t)ing at/from the border**

In his ethnographic work on the process of identity construction across the U.S.-Mexico border, Pablo Vila (2003:608) writes:

“The so-called ‘border studies’ approach was so powerful that many of us, graduate students at U.S. universities, went to the U.S.-Mexico border with the ‘mission’ of validating with ethnographic works the ideas of García Canclini, Anzaldúa, and Rosaldo..., ideas that mostly were developed within a literary criticism framework, not an ethnographic one. However, as soon as I arrived in the region, it became obvious that the border... was different from the way it was habitually portrayed by the most prestigious American border scholars. At the same time... I also discovered that their portrayal of the border was only partially addressing the much more complex process of identity construction I found in the Ciudad Juárez-El Paso area”.

In a similar vein, the border theories that filled my epistemological baggage during the fieldwork appeared inadequate to capture the multiplicity of processes intertwining across the port/border area of Patras. Each theoretical approach could reveal some important aspects and explain particular processes that unfold across or even shape border areas; yet, it would necessarily neglect or omit others that seemed equally relevant. In highlighting the structural forces at the basis of state borders, political economy-approaches made me aware of the historical role of capitalist development in generating spatio-temporal inequalities, territorial divisions, and forced migration, but did not tell me much about the importance of social networks and agency in kick-starting migration movements or in producing bordering practices. Conversely, social constructivists helped me stress the role of migrants and ordinary people in experiencing, enduring, or performing bordering, but would underrate the historical political-economic developments of peculiar border zones and depoliticise the migration movements I was observing. Although attentive to the structural factors regulating mobilities, the AoM approach, by underscoring the primary role of migrants in diverting and subverting bordering practices, would perhaps lead me to attribute an – often ephemeral and romanticised – subjective consciousness to their daily struggles.

The analysis of border theories, like any other attempt to compartmentalise epistemological approaches and ontological concerns, tends to present them as rigidly demarcated and even conflicting – and the position of certain border scholars seems to reinforce such an idea. In reality, it appears to me that, just as the boundaries between the social, economic, geopolitical, and cultural forces that create and shape borders are blurred, so the distinctions between the different theoretical abstractions are not so inflexible and rigorous as they first look. Structural and agential forces, global and local processes, societal and individual choices are frequently commingled and intertwined, producing encounters and clashes, negotiations and conflicts, networks and struggles at and across borders.

The multiplicity of social processes that traverse borders appears therefore irreducible to single epistemological containers. Every theoretical approach, with the peculiar point of view it adopts, is necessary but not sufficient to capture the complicated nature of borders and bordering processes, with their tendencies towards openness and closure, flows and fixities, compromises and contestations, mobilities and immobilities. It is only by standing *at*, or departing *from*, the border that it is possible to examine the various spatio-temporal phenomena intersecting across it and assess the relative importance of each theoretical approach to explain them. Rather than privileging one epistemological approach to study borders and the mobilities that cross them, the research will provide a more nuanced and grounded analysis of the processes that unfold, intersect, and negotiate across borders, without losing sight of the political-economic framework underlying them.

To my knowledge, two other studies have attempted to deploy borders as methodological starting points for the analysis of the multifarious processes that traverse them. Drawing from the Balibar insight of the polysemic, overdetermined, and heterogeneous character of borders (Balibar 2002), both studies are concerned with the increasing proliferation of borders throughout contemporary societies and with the multiplication of processes occurring at and across them. However, their point of view is substantially diverse, as they tackle the issue from different perspectives. The remainder of this section will dissect them more in detail, before eventually introducing the concept of borders as “meeting points”.

### *The Border as Method*

The first and probably most-known of these studies is Mezzadra and Neilson’s notion of “border as method”, according to which the border represents not merely an object of enquiry, but an “epistemological viewpoint” on the structural dynamics reshaping the geographies of global capital and the agential forces challenging or evading them (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013:18). As a crucial institution that articulates the mobilities of people, capital, and goods at global level, the border becomes a privileged site of observation of the constant tensions “between practices of border reinforcement and border crossing” (*ibid.*:3). From the border, they continue, it becomes possible to critically analyse the processes of domination and dispossession that generate socio-spatial relations, as well as the struggles of labour that underlie and inform them.

In Mezzadra and Neilson, the border acquires epistemological relevance, enabling to capture the overarching spatio-temporal coordinates that configure the conflictual relations between capital and labour at global level. The “border as method” fosters a penetrating gaze through the historical process of capitalist appropriation and nationalisation of lands, spaces, and resources, which the authors define as “the primitive accumulation of modern cartography” (*ibid.*:30ff.). Such violent process has historically strived to expand not only spatially but also culturally, through the creation and extension of a knowledge geography aiming to dominate the labour power embodied in human beings and to control their mobilities.

Since capital exerted with renovated intensity its globalising tendencies, their argument goes, the division of labour has shifted to an international level, generating a multiplication of the forms of labour and the struggles underlying it. As they put it, “Processes of intensification, diversification, and heterogenization [of labour] are reshaping laboring lives and conditions... [producing] very different concrete assemblages of employment and unemployment, misery, subsistence and exploitation, flight, refusal, and struggles” (*ibid.*:92). In the encounter between capital and labour, migration has represented a pivotal element: whereas nationally migration met “the needs of capital in its industrial formation without disturbing the reproduction of the national workforce” (*ibid.*:102), with the internationalisation of capital migration has emerged as a highly exploitable and disposable labour force whose global circulation across, and inclusion within, countries needed to be governed through spatial and temporal mechanisms of biopolitical control.

The proliferation of borders regulates the mobility of labour and its differential inclusion within nation states, “filtering, selecting, and channeling migratory movements – rather than simply excluding migrants and asylum seekers” (*ibid.*:165). Such process does not occur in a natural or neutral way, but “involves deploying a huge amount of violence, the processes [of] inclusion through illegalization, the multiplication of detention camps, and thousands of deaths” (*ibid.*). With the spatio-temporal proliferation of borders, Mezzadra and Neilson continue, there has been a multiplication of governmental, securitarian, and humanitarian agents operating at the border, which depoliticised migrant struggles through the employment of a supposedly technical human rights discourse while reinforcing the mechanisms of control on migrant mobilities.

The border becomes, therefore, a site that condenses the contradictions between the capitalist regime of accumulation and dispossession, the governmental mechanisms of security and control that filter labour mobilities, and the migrant struggles that constantly attempt to defy or escape them. Rather than advocating its elimination or democratisation, the authors conclude, it is necessary to grasp the border as a machinery that, through frictions and struggles, produces a subjectivity that can implement practices of resistance at, against, and within borders themselves. As they posit (*ibid.*:280):

“borders are crucial devices of articulation that enable capitals circulation and support the expansion of its frontiers. ... We can thus say definitely that the border is a method for capital. But to posit border as method as a concept for radical political thought and action is not merely to make subversive use of the master’s tools. It is, rather, to point to the necessity of taking capital’s use of the border as a serious and inescapable point of contention. To suggest that borders are essential to capital’s operations is to identify a strategic line of struggle, which reaches far beyond the territorial and jurisdictional edges of nation-states or regions.”

The “border as method” emerges as a powerful approach for the analysis of borders and border mechanisms, insofar as it triggers a comprehensive understanding of the multi-scalar forces and agents producing and shaping them. It manages to link capitalism, securitisation, and migrant mobilities through an organic and coherent narrative, looking at the spatial and temporal relations that these processes create and continuously reconfigure across borders through struggles and conflicts.

However, I argue, it seems to lack a grounded and situated analysis of borders and bordering processes. Despite the authors’ intention “to refer also to the set of everyday practices by which migrants continually come to terms with the pervasive effects of the border” (*ibid.*:13), their analysis remains generic and disconnected from the practical materiality of everyday life. If their intent was to develop a comprehensive method to capture the variegated processes producing and intersecting across borders, they have probably achieved this aim. Yet, the analysis of how such processes concretely intervene in the daily life of border agents on the ground would have added an important empirical angle and enriched the whole methodological approach.

The absence of grounded analysis, I maintain, has two significant epistemological and practical repercussions. First, the border that Mezzadra and Neilson outline emerges as an immaterial, intangible entity, uprooted from any

territorial substance. In line with the idea of the “everywhere-ness” of borders (Balibar 1998; 2002), their analysis stretches far away from nation states’ margins, aware of the spatio-temporal manifestation of borders wherever and whenever the continuous struggles between capital and labour materialise. However, I argue, the territoriality of borders does matter: asserting the peculiar spatiality of borders allows for more nuanced analyses of the uneven and contradictory paths that capital and labour delineate.

Second, and consequently, Mezzadra and Neilson’s analysis seems to focus on the dichotomous distinction between capital and labour, over-emphasising the struggles between the dominant spatio-temporal relations that capital creates and reproduces, with their assemblage of security measures to govern the mobilities of people, and the multifarious acts of defiance and resistance performed by migrant subjectivities. A more grounded analysis, I argue, would allow to capture the multifarious relations occurring at and across borders, disassembling the strategies of negotiations, the mediating subterfuges, and *also* the conflictual procedures underlying them.

#### *A multiperspectival approach: Seeing like a border*

The second approach that takes the border as an epistemological starting point is Rumford’s multiperspectival study of borders (Rumford 2012, 2014a), deeply intertwined with other reflections on the vernacularised and cosmopolitan dimension of borders (Rumford 2008, 2013, 2014b; Cooper and Rumford 2011, 2013; Perkins and Rumford 2013; Perkins, Cooper, and Rumford 2014). Like Mezzadra and Neilson, also Rumford and his colleagues draw from Balibar’s idea of the multiple manifestation of borders outside and within nation states’ margins. Yet, they take it even further, analysing not only the spatial (re)appearance of bordering processes on those places “which (to many people) do not appear to be borders at all” (Rumford 2014a:45), but also the active role of common people in producing and shaping them.

Multiperspectivalism, Rumford explains (2012:893), “has its origins in the idea that contemporary transformations cannot be properly understood from a single privileged vantage point and that events, processes, and actors can be interpreted differently from different perspectives”. A different way to look at borders is therefore necessary, in order to capture the proliferation of borders away from the territorial edges of nation states and the multi-scalar work that border subjects perform in

(re)creating them. In this respect, multiperspectivalism urges to abandon the still predominant perspective of nation states through which many border scholars continue to analyse borders, encouraging them to shift their gaze and to “see like a border”.

The epistemological shift in the way to look at borders has important practical repercussions in border studies. As Rumford specifies (2012, 2014a), “seeing like a border” does not merely mean standing from the outside and looking inside, but rather understanding the constitutive nature of borders and the multiple perspectives of the agents that produce and craft them. In moving away from a state-centric approach, multiperspectivalism eschews a predetermined sympathy with “the subaltern, the dispossessed, the downtrodden, the marginal” (2014a:41), as this would represent just one among the multiple perspectives intersecting at borders.

“Seeing like a border” also signifies that borders are neither state mechanisms to defend well-defined territories, nor “lines in the sand” to be protected or securitised. Instead, Rumford reminds us, they should be conceived as zones or places that are produced by a multiplicity of agents and networked through a myriad of relations and connections. It is here that the vernacularised and cosmopolitan character of borders comes to light: as borders are no longer located at the margins of nation states and, conversely, nation states are no longer the only agents involved in crafting borders, “citizens (and indeed non-citizens) may be active in constructing or dismantling borders” (Perkins, Cooper, and Rumford 2014:19), contributing to the aforementioned process of “borderwork” (Rumford 2008, 2013).

Borderwork and connectivity emerge as crucial elements in the construction of a vernacularised and cosmopolitan border, as they shift the focus of attention from the state dimension of bordering to a multi-scalar and multiperspectival assessment of border practices. Looking at the vernacular manifestation of borders through the everyday borderwork of a multiplicity of agents allows the authors to argue that borders do not necessarily strengthen national security, nor they merely divide people and territories; rather, they connect them and simultaneously project them towards a global, cosmopolitan dimension (Cooper and Rumford 2011; Perkins and Rumford 2013; Perkins, Cooper, and Rumford 2014). Borders, therefore, should be conceived “not simply as markers of division but also as mechanisms of connection and encounter” (Cooper and Rumford 2013:108), joining what is different and projecting it to a wider scale (cp. Van Schendel 2005).

In looking at the border from different viewpoints, multiperspectivalism represents an interesting epistemological approach that could effectively enrich the analysis of borders and of the variegated processes crisscrossing them. Unlike the “border as method” narrative, where the border appears as an indefinite and vague entity, “seeing like a border” concentrates on spatially defined places with a territorially grounded characteristic and a potentially global dimension. Besides, it detaches from the border generally recognised as geopolitically or historically significant, focusing on localities that appear less visible or functional as borders.

In celebrating borders merely as connecting institutions, however, the multiperspectival study of borders risks not only to obliterate the peculiar history of each border place, but also to depoliticise the struggles of the people that live and experience the border. Although taking the border as a vantage point, “seeing like a border” actually fails to see those fractures and divergences that cut across borders, wiping out the situated knowledge production that border subjects develop. Silencing the differences, the oppositions, and the conflicts that produce and are produced by borders, I maintain, constitutes *de facto* a political choice that endorses an institutional co-optation and homogenisation of border struggles, corroborating those same class and power divisions that borders create, rather than erasing.

## **2.8 Borders as meeting points**

Just like Mezzadra and Neilson’s and Rumford’s perspectives, the idea of borders as “meeting points” conceives the border as a privileged point of view for the study of border theories and practices. Only by standing *at* and looking *from* the border, I contend, it will be possible to capture and analyse the variegated processes that intersect across borders, while simultaneously assessing the efficacy of border theories. Yet, the concept of borders as “meeting points” attempts to overcome the limits of both the “border as method”, which conceives borders as a spatio-temporal manifestation of class struggles between capital and labour with indistinct repercussions on the ground, and of the “seeing like a border” approach which, on the contrary, concentrates on situated practices but neglects the political economy of the European border and migration regime. It does so by seeking a fruitful yet critical dialogue that could bridge the differences among the various epistemological approaches, in order to explain the manifold, complex, and variegated social processes

that unfold at and across borders within the overarching political-economic framework underlying them.

The tri-dimensional prism of space-time-everyday constitutes, I argue, the hinge that outlines the contours of the concept of borders as “meeting points” vis-à-vis the various theories on borders. The reference to space alludes to the necessity of considering not only the capitalist process of spatial production, but also the multifarious manifestations of borders increasingly away from the “territorial trap” of nation states, wherever they materialise (see Balibar 1998, 2002; C. Johnson et al. 2011; R. Jones and Johnson 2014). The study of borders cannot elude, I maintain, the analysis of the spatial relations in which bordering practices are entrenched, as it allows to capture and understand the current developments of the social relations of production. Like political economy approaches, the concept of borders as “meeting points” confers notable relevance on neoliberalism, and on capitalism more generally, to produce and shape socio-spatial relations and conflicts: there is hardly a place on earth that has not been affected by the development or the imposition of capitalist relations.

Yet, neoliberalism is here conceived as a highly uneven and variegated process (Ong 2006; N. Smith 2008; Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010) that entails multiple declinations, configurations, and contrasts, compelling it to negotiate its presence on the ground. Like social constructivists, the idea of borders as “meeting points” aims to investigate the role of a myriad of social and individual agents that experience, negotiate, contest, or even produce bordering practices. Political-economic and historical analyses should be accompanied by ethnographic research, capable of grasping the multifarious nuances, contradictions, and conflicts occurring on the ground. Global and regional organisations, international NGOs and grassroots associations, state institutions and local authorities, inhabitants and migrants: their continuous and at times conflictual relations over a certain territory are paramount to evaluate the process of bordering (Rumford 2008, 2013; Cooper and Rumford 2011, 2013).

The mention of time hints, first, at the idea of “bringing history back in” (O’Dowd 2010). The reintroduction of history in border studies, I argue, adds further rigour to the analysis of borders, achieving a two-fold purpose. First, it would allow for a critical reassessment of some border theories, which lack or neglect a proper confrontation with history. Second, it would enable a more detailed comprehension of

situated border practices, capturing the multifarious repercussions of the uneven development of capitalism and the uniqueness of borders (J. Anderson and O’Dowd 1999; O’Dowd 2010). As Mezzadra and Neilson argue (2013), borders constitute a vibrant vantage point from which to analyse the spatio-temporal dynamics of domination and dispossession within capitalism and the multi-scalar conflicts they nurture. Borders, the authors continue, represent not just territorial or geographical division to map the modern world, but socio-spatial institutions with a historical role in the processes of accumulation and exploitation.

Time also implies that border studies need to take into consideration the multiple temporalities in which borders splinter and regulate mobilities (see Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Griffiths 2014; Tazzioli 2018). In the context of increasing acceleration of capitalist relations, borders channel and filter the mobility of labour at global level, hastening certain flows while delaying, diverting, or obstructing others. Through the introduction of “technologies of temporal management, whether they seek to speed border-crossing processes by using biometrics and chipped passports or to slow and even block border passages through such techniques as detention, interceptions, or ‘preemptive *refoulement*’” (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013:133), borders have acquired a spatio-temporal thickness for certain categories of people, regulating their differential inclusion within labour markets (De Genova 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012; Garelli and Tazzioli 2016; Tazzioli 2018).

In this respect, the idea of borders as “meeting points” builds upon the “border as method” approach, inasmuch as it attempts to grasp the dynamic and intertwining spatio-temporal processes that produce and configure – and are simultaneously produced and configured by – borders. As the authors posit, “Borders also play a key role in producing the times and spaces of global capitalism... [shaping] the struggles that rise up within and against these times and spaces” (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013:4). Moreover, it recognises the importance of structural processes in evaluating the role of global capital, regional organisations, state actors, and local institutions in shaping the process of bordering, as well as their continuous, intertwining, and contrasting relations over a certain territory. The analysis of such processes appears necessary to capture both the global political-economic framework producing borders in the first place, and the peculiar historical developments that have given certain border areas their specifically uneven configurations.

Yet, this is only part of the story. In Mezzadra and Neilson, space and time are continuously intertwining *across* borders while they are mutually reshaped *from* borders through the struggles that migrants enact. Yet, I argue, the lack of a grounded approach renders these struggles intangible, disconnected from the vivid and multifarious materiality of everyday life. The proliferation of borders throughout western societies, in fact, has not simply modified the spatio-temporal dynamics of mobility, but also deeply affected the everyday life of migrants, who became the target of criminalised, securitised, and racialised measures (R. Jones and Johnson 2014; Nava 2015; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2017). Despite capturing the role of borders in regulating the mobilities of, and the struggles between, capital and labour, the everyday life of migrants at and across borders appears still blurred and indistinct. The role of individual agents appears marginal, trapped between the “capital’s expansionist drive... [with] its need to organize space according to multiple hierarchical criteria” (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013:66) and “the multiplication of borders and the operation of zoning technologies that make the space of global capital all but smooth” (*ibid.*:203).

It is in the everyday, I argue, that the concept of border as “meeting points” traces remarkable differences with the “border as method” approach. Not only does the latter tend to neglect the nuances and contradictions of the everyday life itself, but it also considers labour as an already fully formed and politically mature force distinguished in contraposition with capital and the state. The analysis of the everyday in the study of borders contemplates (a critical examination of) the political-economic context underlying their multiplication, without nonetheless overlooking the situated and nuanced practices that unfold on the ground. In this respect, it might aptly explain the repercussions of borders and bordering policies on the differential (im)mobilities of migrants.

Conceptualising migrants as a cohesive and indivisible force endowed with a clear-cut political subjectivity jeopardises, I contend, an analytical comprehension of their multifarious histories, identities, and ambitions, as well as of their continuous connections and interactions with the surrounding environment. Situated and grounded analyses complement the concept of borders as “meeting points”, exploring how borders engender class, power, and ethnic divisions not only *among* migrant groups (see Yuval-Davis 2007, 2013), but also *within* them. Such analyses should refrain from either restricting the depth of field to their mere experiences of the border,

often detaching the structural framework under which these experiences occur, or, on the contrary, romanticising their scattered acts of contestation as a uniform voice of resistance against bordering practices and migration policies.

The examination of the uneven and heterogeneous character of migration does not aspire to depoliticise migrant mobilities: every act or strategy of migration, I argue, often involves indeed a political decision and acquires a political attribute. In maintaining the element of struggle, the research distances itself from the idea of “seeing like a border”, which conceives borderwork primarily as connecting depoliticised practices. Quite the contrary, the concept of borders as “meeting points” strives not only to enrich the analysis of migration movements, acknowledging their complex and multifarious characteristics, but also to reinforce their inherently political claims, brandishing a more efficient critical weapon against the European border and migration regime. Rather than pre-emptively assuming it, migrant subjectivity should be constructed from the everyday relations and conflicts that migrants interweave, with the awareness that “autonomy is produced from heteronomy” (Samaddar 2005:16).

It is *at* the border that all these various theoretical and empirical threads reconnect and interweave. Just as the variegated spatio-temporal processes continuously converge and interact in the materiality of the everyday only to depart again and give life to new configurations, so the different epistemological approaches come into being at the border and are critically reassessed vis-à-vis the practical manifestations and interrelations that such processes bring forth. It is *at* the border, therefore, that the researcher should stand in order to capture the multiplicity of processes as they converge and negotiate their presence, as well as to evaluate the various border theories and their practical translation on the ground.

The port/border area of Patras represents a theoretical and practical “meeting point” where these different dynamics and processes continuously intermingle and clash, generating a plurality of uneven configurations, interrelations, contradictions, and struggles in the materiality of the everyday. Before proceeding with the analysis of (the intertwining relations among) neoliberal practices, securitisation measures, and migrants’ autonomy across the port/border area of Patras, however, it is necessary to look at the wider framework in which such processes are politically and socially constructed: the EU and its regime of border and migration management.

### 3 Border management

One thing is true at any rate, which is that some governments thought... that the free circulation of grain was not only a better source of profit, but also a much better mechanism of security against the scourge of scarcity.

Michel Foucault 2007, *Security, territory, population*.

#### 3.1 Introduction

In contradiction to premature predictions of a “borderless world”, neoliberal globalisation has actually brought about a “very bordered world” (Diener and Hagen 2012:17; see also Wilson and Donnan 2012b). Borders seem indeed to be everywhere: they have reappeared or intensified along the external margins of the EU, in crucial logistical articulations such as airports and ports, through bureaucratic practices and migration policies, and even across the bodies of people. Rather than disappearing from the European territory, borders have been decentred, diverted, and displaced at different scales, while some of their customary functions have been privatised, interiorised, or relocated at sub- or supra-national level.

The proliferation of bordering practices and the multiplication of the actors involved in border management have had concrete yet highly variegated consequences for the mobilities traversing borders. Certain flows have been accelerated or encouraged through the construction of physical and digital architectures and the development of logistical infrastructures, while others have been hampered, decelerated, or blocked through the increasing securitisation, bureaucratisation, and technological improvement of those same architectures and infrastructures. Whereas for certain mobilities borders do represent a serious obstacle, others can circulate unfettered, with border checks constituting only a temporary annoyance.

This chapter will critically analyse the process of border and migration management in Europe, in order to examine the wider geopolitical and economic framework within which events in the port/border area of Patras have been unfolding. Following analogous paths traced along the U.S.-Mexico border (see Andreas and Snyder 2000; Andreas 2003, 2009; Coleman 2005; Sparke 2006), a first approach frames the European process of border and migration management in terms of security/economy nexus, emphasising the dichotomous yet intertwining relations between openness and closure, connections and restrictions, de- and re-territorialisation of bordering practices that market and security imperatives condense across borders (Cholewinski 2000; Huysmans 2000, 2004; Bigo 2002, 2005; Samers

2004; Bigo and Guild 2010). In managing borders, this approach claims, European institutions and national governments attempt to simultaneously guarantee and protect freedom of movement across the European territory.

Drawing from the Foucauldian concepts of biopolitics and governmentality (see Foucault 1995, 2007, 2010), a second important research strand conceives the process of border management as a technique of government, i.e. as a constantly shifting apparatus of devices, laws, and dispositions that pervasively attempt to manage mobilities and exert control over the bodies of people, often jeopardising any possibility of resistance (Fassin 2001, 2011; Salter 2004, 2007; Amoore 2006). These authors have focused on the processes of privatisation, commodification, relocation, and externalisation of border controls and security mechanisms within, across, and outside the European territory, in order to prevent and deter unwanted incoming migration movements (see Lahav and Guiraudon 2000; Bigo and Guild 2010).

A third research thread concentrates on the dovetailed relationship between the securitarian and humanitarian apparatuses that, through the combined operations of military forces and NGOs, regulate the admission, reception, distribution, and disposal of migrants within the European territory (De Genova and Peutz 2010; Walters 2012; Squire 2015; J. M. Williams 2015; Garelli, Sciarba, and Tazzioli 2018). The management of European borders does not simply entail their fortification nor their regulative balance between freedom and security instances; rather, it involves a complex paraphernalia of logistical infrastructures and bureaucratic procedures that govern the mobilities across and within Europe according to national and regional labour market mechanisms. Entrapped within the tangles of this regime, migrants are constantly striving to escape, producing alternative cartographies of spatial disobedience (Karakayali and Rigo 2010; Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles 2015; Casas-Cortes et al. 2017; Tazzioli 2015b).

Rather than adding a particular contribution to an already wide array of epistemological approaches, the chapter will attempt to gaze at the European border and migration regime in a different way. Each of the aforementioned epistemological viewpoints appears indeed necessary yet not sufficient to capture the complexity of processes, policies, and procedures that constitute and configure such regime. Just as border theories have shown advantages and limitations when conceiving the border, so the various approaches on border management have focused on certain aspects or mechanisms yet overlooking or neglecting others.

The present research acknowledges the importance of the analysis of border management as a governmental technique, insofar as it allows grasping certain processes and power relations occurring at and across borders, wherever they manifest themselves. However, looking at bordering practices just in terms of widespread penetration and dissemination of mechanisms for security and control appears, I argue, deceitful and reductive. It is deceitful, as it conceives migrants as passive subjects often incapable of agency, thus understating their active role in negotiating and contesting the bordering regime. It is reductive, as it flattens the analysis of social processes to a one-dimensional perspective, i.e. the examination of top-down practices of bordering and of the actors who accomplish them.

Taking into consideration the security/economy nexus certainly adds a fruitful perspective for the analysis of border management dynamics, opening up a relational understanding of the intertwining connective and restrictive measures operating across borders. However, I argue, such vision not only seems to consider the border merely as a territorial valve that can be opened or closed according to necessities, but also enables a dichotomous perception of the same processes occurring therein, which risks undermining the heterogeneous and multifarious flows that traverse them and the differential mechanisms that regulate such flows. As Bigo aptly comments (2011:32), “Security is not only about stopping. Opening can also be a ‘security’ move”. A whole variety of relations, movements, and struggles, I further remark, happens in between: the focus on circulation manages to grasp such processes in a more coherent manner, although it misses considering for the interrelated patterns of logistics and trade, and their decisive role in the (de)construction of borders.

The chapter will attempt to hone a different gaze through a two-way step. First, it will enlarge the depth of field, analysing the creation and development of the European single market – in the context of the process of global neoliberal restructuring – and its role in defining the evolution of the border and migration regime. The examination of the Schengen and Dublin Conventions will shed light on the intertwining relations between freedom and security, openness and closure, connections and restrictions that have characterised the formation of the European single market and its simultaneous dismantlement and erections of internal and external barriers, guaranteeing the concurrent expansion and securitisation of flows across and within the European territory.

Second, and consequently, the chapter will look at the parallel development of a logistical network to regulate the differential (im)mobility of capital, information, trades, and people, accelerating or facilitating certain flows while delaying, diverting, or hindering others. The dichotomous relations and conflicts that borders generate and reproduce appear indeed insufficient to capture and understand the multiplicity of intertwining processes that unfold across borders. Border studies, I argue, could instead benefit from looking at how securitisation governs not simply territories or bodies, but also the variegated mobilities that traverse borders, or attempt to do so, within the capitalist imperatives of production and circulation (see also Aradau and Blanke 2010).

The analysis of trade connections and transport networks, consistently overlooked in border studies, becomes therefore as relevant as the examination of migrant mobilities across the European space. Within the overarching process of border management, the chapter will investigate the logistical networks that connect Europe through a dense articulation of roads, railways, and seaports, as well as the institutional mechanisms of reception, detention, and deportation of migrant flows that constitute the regime of distribution and circulation of exploitable labour force across the European territory. The analysis of the differential mobilities of capital, commodities, and people vis-à-vis the expansion of logistical networks and the acceleration of spatio-temporal dynamics could further enrich, I argue, the study of borders and their management.

Taking into consideration the historical development and the political-economic forces behind the process of European bordering, the role of social groups and individuals in experiencing and performing bordering practices, and the continuous entanglement of connections, negotiations, and contradictions within and between dominant and situated practices, the chapter will eventually restrict the depth of field, introducing the case study of the port/border area of Patras in the context of the European border and migration regime.

### **3.2 Openness and closure**

#### *Towards a European common market*

Since its inception in 1957, the European Economic Community (EEC) has always championed the idea of creating an internal borderless market where capital, goods, services, and workers could move without restrictions. The preamble of the founding

Treaty of Rome clearly stated that the EEC should have laid the groundwork for “eliminating the barriers which divide Europe” and establishing “an ever-closer union among the European peoples”. According to its advocates, this project would have “increased growth rates, [led to] convergence in national economic performance and structures, enhanced welfare and reduced spatial inequalities” (Hudson 2003:52; see also Olsen 2008). However, no concrete step towards a greater political or economic integration has been advanced during the following three decades, as the peculiar configuration of capitalism favoured the socio-economic development of territorially-bounded welfare states, capable of advancing redistributive policies and alleviating the struggles between capital and labour (Gilpin 2001).

The significance of state borders concerned not only the spatial reach of welfare systems, but also the management of migratory flows and the implementation of migration programmes. After WWII, migration to Europe was functional to the reconstruction of the agricultural and industrial sectors devastated by the war. Given the shortage of domestic labour pools, some European states resorted to cheap and unskilled foreign workforce to fill the gaps in their internal labour market, either from their former colonies, through intra-European mobility, or with designated guest-worker programmes (Baldwin-Edwards and Schain 1994; Messina 2007; Geddes and Scholten 2016). This “first wave of immigration” (Huysmans 2000; Messina 2007; Geddes and Scholten 2016) occurring throughout the 1950s and 1960s was deemed necessary but temporary. Popular and political vision conceived immigration as a malleable and highly-exploitable resource, which singular member states could efficiently regulate and dispose of according to their labour market needs (Messina 2007). The economic recession in the 1970s led to a first tightening of immigration policies and to the interruption of guest worker programmes, without a parallel decrease in immigration population, though. Whereas labour migration was increasingly subject to controls and restrictive measures, a second wave of migration was allowed on the basis of family reunification, as proof of the permanent character that extra-European migration was assuming (Huysmans 2000; Messina 2007; Geddes and Scholten 2016).

The last decades of XX century marked the advent of new relationships between capital, labour, and the state (Harvey 2005). The restructuring of global capital led to the disintegration of the traditional spatio-temporal configuration emerged during the Fordist mode of production, accelerating the political and economic cooperation

among European member states for the proactive expansion of the single market (see Pauly 1995; J. Anderson and O'Dowd 1999; Hudson 2003; Peck 2012). The fulfilment of an internal market that could be competitive on a global scale necessarily required a double-speed process that some commentators defined as an "economic European fortress" (Baker 2004; Giaque 2004). Such process involved, on the one hand, the reduction or elimination of internal barriers that impeded the economic, commercial, and monetary unification among its states and, on the other hand, the protection of this inner space from global competition through the retention of customs and fiscal barriers (J. Anderson 2001; O'Dowd 2002; Agnew 2005).

Starting from the 1980s the borders between European member states became "an irrational anachronism, obstructing the realization of a greater 'European' economy" (Walters 2002:564). In this scenario, borders were conceived "not as barriers to *political* union in the EC [European Community], but as barriers to the completion of a European market [and] to the free flow of the capital, goods, services and persons deemed to be necessary to make the EC competitive in global markets" (O'Dowd 2002:20, his emphasis). Times were ripe for "Completing the internal market", as the title of the 1985 White Paper of the European Commission (EC) enthusiastically proclaimed. The 58-page document is often regarded as a milestone in the construction of the European market, laying the foundations for the removal of those physical, technical, and fiscal barriers that "perpetuate the costs and disadvantages of a divided market" (EC 1985: Introduction).

However, no physical barrier could have been removed unless the EEC "found alternative ways of dealing with... public security, immigration and drug controls" (*ibid.*). Just as the creation of an economic union would have entailed the preservation of external trade and fiscal barriers, so the fulfilment of an internal borderless market could have taken place only with a parallel shifting and strengthening of border controls outside, across, and inside European external borders, in order to compensate the increased freedom of movement with a similar increase in security measures (see Mitsilegas 2002; Huysmans 2004; Walters 2004). The process of construction of the European border regime, I argue, has indeed occurred in concomitance with, rather than merely as a "spillover" of (Huysmans 2000), the development of the European single market.

The Schengen Agreements<sup>17</sup> constitute another milestone in this respect, as they set the stage for the simultaneous expansion and protection of the European market, managing its crisscrossing flows. On June 14, 1985, the representatives of the governments of Germany, France, and the Benelux countries met in the small village of Schengen (Luxembourg) to sign the agreements on the gradual abolition of controls at their common borders. The five member states agreed to progressively reduce security checkpoints along their common territorial borders while strengthening their external frontiers, “with a view to ensuring the free movement of persons, goods and services” (preamble). Yet, for an effective result in externalising, spreading, and homogenising border procedures, a number of other issues had to be regulated, starting from migratory movements.

Balancing between market and security imperatives, the Agreements have reconfigured the geography of European borders, eliminating (or rather, relocating and disseminating) security controls inside the European territory while reinforcing its external frontiers. According to the text, in the short term member states should have “approximate[d] their visa policies... in order to avoid the adverse consequences in the field of immigration and security that may result from easing checks at the common borders”, while “taking into account the need to ensure the protection of the entire territory of the five States against illegal immigration and activities which could jeopardise security” (art. 7). Besides, states were required to “reinforce cooperation between their customs and police authorities, notably in combating crime, particularly illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and arms, the unauthorised entry and residence of persons, customs and tax fraud and smuggling” (art.9), improving the exchange of information between them.

In the long term, with regard to the movement of people the Schengen Agreements envisaged the repositioning of border controls from the national onto the European level, prompting member states to harmonise those “laws, regulations and administrative provisions concerning the prohibitions and restrictions on which the

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<sup>17</sup> Although the Schengen Agreements were conceived beyond the EU realm, they were incorporated in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, becoming part of the European *acquis communautaire*. This process has compelled all member and candidate countries to enforce its provisions, harmonising their visa policies and strengthening their external borders. With the progressive eastward enlargement of the EU and the admission of former Soviet countries, “The fulfilment of these conditions, which have been imposed unilaterally by the EU, is a sine qua non condition for their accession to the Union” (Mitsilegas 2002:668). As of 2018, all EU member states (apart from UK and Ireland) join the borderless Europe, together with Norway, Iceland, and Switzerland. Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Cyprus are obliged to join as EU members, but their full participation has been postponed until the requirements for satisfying an efficient capability of border control are met.

checks are based” (art. 17). Besides, they encouraged states to take “complementary measures to safeguard internal security and prevent illegal immigration by nationals of States that are not members of the European Communities” (*ibid.*). Such harmonisation measures were considered necessary for the market expansion within the redesigned European geography, insofar as “each member state is becoming the representative of the others” (Balibar 2002:78)

### *Deepening and widening*

Since the 1990s, the process of deepening and widening of the European integration process has further intensified, coinciding with significant geopolitical changes at global and regional level. With the realisation of the Economic Monetary Union in 1990, the signing of the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht, and the establishment of the Stability and Growth Pact in 1997, the “neoliberal monetarist turn” was eventually formalised and constitutionalised (Wissel and Wolff 2017:238). The reinforcement of the EU through the implementation of neoliberal market-driven policies and the creation of a common regulatory framework with binding effects on its member states has contributed to the construction of a homogeneous space, without nonetheless solving structural economic inequalities among member states (see Hudson 2003; Agnew 2005; Overbeek 2012; Crum 2013; Wissel and Wolff 2017).

The incorporation of former Soviet states and the political-economic cooperation with neighbouring countries have significantly enlarged the spatial reach of the EU (J. W. Scott 2005; Popescu 2008; Bialasiewicz et al. 2009; Dimitrovova 2012). The European eastward expansion and the political instability in the Middle East and Africa brought new migration influxes to the EU, often received with further restrictions of immigration policies, intensification of security measures, social stigmatisation, and widespread rise in far-right and xenophobic parties (see Bigo 2002, 2004; Gingrich 2004; Messina 2007; Chebel d’Appollonia and Reich 2008; Green-Pedersen and Odmalm 2008; Guia, Woude, and Leun 2013; Stumpf 2013; Sekeris and Vasilakis 2016). Whereas northern European countries started to regiment migrant mobilities, southern member states (in particular Italy, Greece, and Spain) were turning into migrant labour importers, attracting flows from Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the Middle East, northern Africa, and Sub-Saharan countries (Messina 2007; Hollifield, Martin, and Orrenius 2014).

In this context of increasing intergovernmental cooperation at European level,

in 1990 the same five countries met again in the Luxemburgish town to sign the relative Convention implementing the Agreements, which entered into force in March 1995 including also Spain and Portugal. The Schengen Convention defines the rules to overstep both internal borders, which “may be crossed at any point without any checks on persons being carried out” (art. 2.1), and external borders, which instead “may in principle only be crossed at border crossing points and during the fixed opening hours” (art. 3.1). In strengthening the external borders, the Convention also regulates the movement of people across them, stating that controls “shall include not only the verification of travel documents and the other conditions governing entry, residence, work and exit but also checks to detect and prevent threats to the national security and public policy of the contracting parties” (art. 6.2a).

As Guild and Bigo point out (2010), the internal borders are relieved from temporal or spatial meanings, losing their attachment to the national territory. The external borders, defined through exclusion from the internal ones, are instead loaded with further political and symbolic significance. Not only are states in charge of establishing the authorised air, sea and land border crossings, external borders also become bastions for the defence of the whole European space, both in terms of security and identity (Walters 2002; Van Houtum 2010b). This defensive role, however, has been increasingly appointed to private security companies and travel carriers, forcing them to repatriate those people not complying with the entry rules of the country of destination. Such procedures have disseminated border controls in international seaports, airports, and road/railway transit points within and outside Europe, engendering “variegated authority and overlapping sovereignties” (Salter 2007:56).

The Schengen Convention also establishes the conditions for border crossing, inviting member states to harmonise their visa policies, providing common rules for regulating short- and long-stay visas, and deciding upon the circulation of aliens within the European space. In so doing, it creates a two-speed mechanism where European citizens can move to and live in any other European country without any restrictions, while third-country nationals are always subject to bureaucratic requests and controls, and need to report their presence to the competent authorities. Besides, legal channels to enter the EU have been curtailed, rendering migrant journeys more insecure and expensive (Nadig 2002; Dikeç 2009). A variegated assemblage of restrictive bureaucratic measures, permeating security controls, and invasive biometric instruments have been put in place to manage migrant mobilities and

regulate the entry of exploitable and disposable workforce into Europe.

The incorporation of migration and asylum issues within the Schengen Convention, originally conceived for the enlargement and protection of the European market, represents, I argue, a subsidiary process aiming to subsume migration management policies and procedures within the economic imperatives of the European common market. In this respect, the Convention determines the responsibilities of the member countries to examine asylum applications, declaring that member states “undertake to process any application for asylum lodged by an alien within any one of their territories” (art. 29.1). However, this obligation does not constrain a state to allow all asylum seekers to enter or remain within its territory. In fact, every member state “shall retain the right to refuse entry or to expel asylum seekers to a third State on the basis of its national provisions and in accordance with its international commitments” (art. 29.2).

The combined dispositions on border controls and asylum regulation have redrawn the geography of asylum in and around Europe, creating a buffer zone of purportedly safe third countries outside European external borders where to safely expel undesired migrants (Del Sarto 2010). Over time, the number of recognised safe third countries has staggeringly grown, also due to the stipulation of bilateral treaties between EU and extra-EU states. Moreover, their role has often changed, shifting from external recipients for the deportation of failed asylum seekers to *de facto* active participants in the European migration management policy (see Dikeç 2009; Mountz and Loyd 2014).

The intertwining provisions of the Schengen and Dublin Conventions – the latter signed only a few days earlier and entered into force in 1997 – regulate the mobility of migrants *within* the European space, limiting their freedom of movement therein. Both conventions charge member states with the responsibility of supervising their territory and managing migration flows across and within it, thus re-territorialising the role of borders and reaffirming their importance for the control of certain mobilities. As capital, goods, services, and citizens can travel boundlessly within the European space, migrants and asylum seekers remain subject to an uneven regime of policies and dispositions that vary from state to state according to their political will or economic needs.

Although the Schengen Convention touches upon the issue of asylum, it is the Dublin Convention that provides a more articulate framework, determining the

member state responsible for the examination of asylum applications of documented and undocumented migrants. Article 6 introduces the principle of the “first country of asylum”, stating that the first European country of arrival of asylum seekers coming from an extra-EU state and having crossed the border illegally is responsible for examining their asylum applications. That same country is likewise compelled to readmit within its territory the applicant who has moved into another European country for whatever reason (art. 10), thus burdening the member countries located along European external borders with the examination of asylum applications (Dikeç 2009; Mouzourakis 2014).

The development of IT-based and biometric technologies has enabled the application of dispositions of surveillance and profiling (Bigo 2002; Broeders 2007), putting the racialised body of mobile people at the centre of the stage and controlling the mobility of those considered unwanted or dangerous (Van Der Ploeg 1999; Fassin 2001, 2011; Silverstein 2005; Amoore 2006; Kuster and Tsianos 2013). Both Schengen and Dublin Conventions envisaged the creation of two European databases for the storage and exchange of information related to undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, respectively. Although originated with different purposes and within different legal frameworks, the Schengen Information System, the EURODAC<sup>18</sup>, and the Visa Information System<sup>19</sup> have devised a comprehensive apparatus for the management of (unwanted) mobilities within the EU, safeguarding the area of freedom, security, and justice that European institutions and member states purported to build (Aus 2003).

The growing interoperability of the different databases for matters of internal security is fraught with deep-rooted geopolitical connotations. For Mouzourakis (2014:12), the establishment of EURODAC laid bare member states’ intention “to shift responsibility to the external borders of the EU, with one eye cast on the new ‘buffer zone’ offered by the 2004 accession countries”. What is more, the employment and broadening of surveillance devices has enabled the political domination over ordinary people and their mobilities (Gilliom 2001). The expansion of EURODAC

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<sup>18</sup> The names of the databases established through the Schengen and the Dublin Conventions, respectively. EURODAC is the acronym of European Dactylographic System

<sup>19</sup> A European database established in 2003 that contains information on non-EU citizens applying for a visa to enter the Schengen area.

scopes to include the collection of undocumented migrants' fingerprints<sup>20</sup> has showed "how Schengen and EURODAC concerns are intertwined" (Mathiesen 1999:18) when it comes to the protection of free market principles. Their interoperability has revealed the political attempt to conflate regular, irregular, and forced migrant mobilities under the pretext of internal security (Mitsilegas 2008), regulating their flows within the European space.

Since their inception, the Schengen and Dublin Conventions have changed the geopolitical character of the EEC/EU, relocating border controls and security mechanisms outside and within the European space. Yet, rather than engendering what some scholars define as "fortress Europe" (Carr 2016), I argue that the proliferation and dissemination of borders and security measures have been functional to the correct and safe expansion of the common market and the regulation of the different mobilities traversing it. The complex and variegated apparatus of border enforcement mechanisms, migration and asylum policies, and biometrical technologies has not functioned as a deterrent to restrain migrant mobilities; rather, it has reconfigured the geopolitics of migrant mobilities in the European territory, forcing them to divert or delay their spatio-temporal admission within the EU and prompting them to constantly elaborate new strategies to avoid border controls (Andrijasevic 2010). Whereas certain flows have been enabled and speeded up, others have been impeded, sanctioned, or decelerated, disciplining their differential inclusion within the European territory (De Genova 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012, 2013). By restricting the legal channels to enter the EU, such a regime has produced a vicious cycle of illegality, generating a class of highly exploitable, docile, and deportable workforce functional to the labour market needs (Mezzadra and Neilson 2012, 2013; Tazzioli 2017a).

### **3.3 Regulating mobilities**

#### *The management of logistical networks*

The early-stage literature on neoliberal globalisation enthusiastically, yet prematurely, proclaimed the disappearance of borders at global level and predicted the end of nation states, superseded by sub- and supra-national forms of spatial organisations (Camilleri and Falk 1992; O'Brien 1992; Ohmae 1996). The conjunctural socio-economic

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<sup>20</sup> Whereas the SIS was entitled to collect only basic information, excluding fingertips, of undocumented migrants, the EURODAC was originally conceived to collect information and fingerprints of just asylum seekers, for a correct application of the Dublin Convention.

conditions and technological developments in the field of communication and transport seemed to have fulfilled capitalism's long-awaited aspiration of annihilating space by time. The neoliberal revolution in logistics has enabled what Harvey (1989) notoriously calls the process of "time-space compression" for the increasingly faster circulation of capital, goods, information, and people.

In this process, logistics has turned from a military technique for the provisioning of troops in wartime into a civilian business science that supposedly generates infrastructural and socio-economic development (Cowen 2014; Khalili 2017). The development of logistics contemplates the homogenisation and integration of the whole supply chain, from the production site to the final consumer. This process involves the design and consolidation of integrated freight networks, in order to reduce costs and times of logistical operations<sup>21</sup>, and to remove spatial barriers for the mobility of capital and goods (Tavasszy, Ruijgrok, and Thissen 2003; M. Hesse and Rodrigue 2004). Comprehensive intermodal networks become crucial for the operational dynamics of supply chains, as they not only overcome spatio-temporal barriers and facilitate flows, but also add value to the entire logistical process (Harvey 2010; Cowen 2014).

The fulfilment of a homogeneous market space has involved passive actions, such as the abolition of the internal borders, as well as active interventions, through the development of a cohesive system of networks, connections, and interactions at regional level, the consolidation and standardisation of the variegated policies of its member states, and the remapping of its territorial space. One of these interventions is the creation of Trans-European Networks (TEN), a wide and homogeneous common system of transport, energy, and telecommunication infrastructures. The "inauguration of a common transport policy" was already envisaged in the founding Treaty of Rome (Art. 3e), but it is only with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty that the TENs are officially launched. In fact, the establishment and development of TENs should have aimed at promoting

"harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment, a high degree of convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic

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<sup>21</sup> In logistics studies, much of the literature has focused on considering logistics costs (from warehouse to distribution and transport) no longer as simply derived from demand, but rather as an integral part of it. This meant turning logistics from a costly burden to a value-added resource (M. Hesse and Rodrigue 2004; Panayides 2006; for a critical stance, see Robinson 2002).

and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States” (Council of the European Communities and Commission of the European Communities 1992).

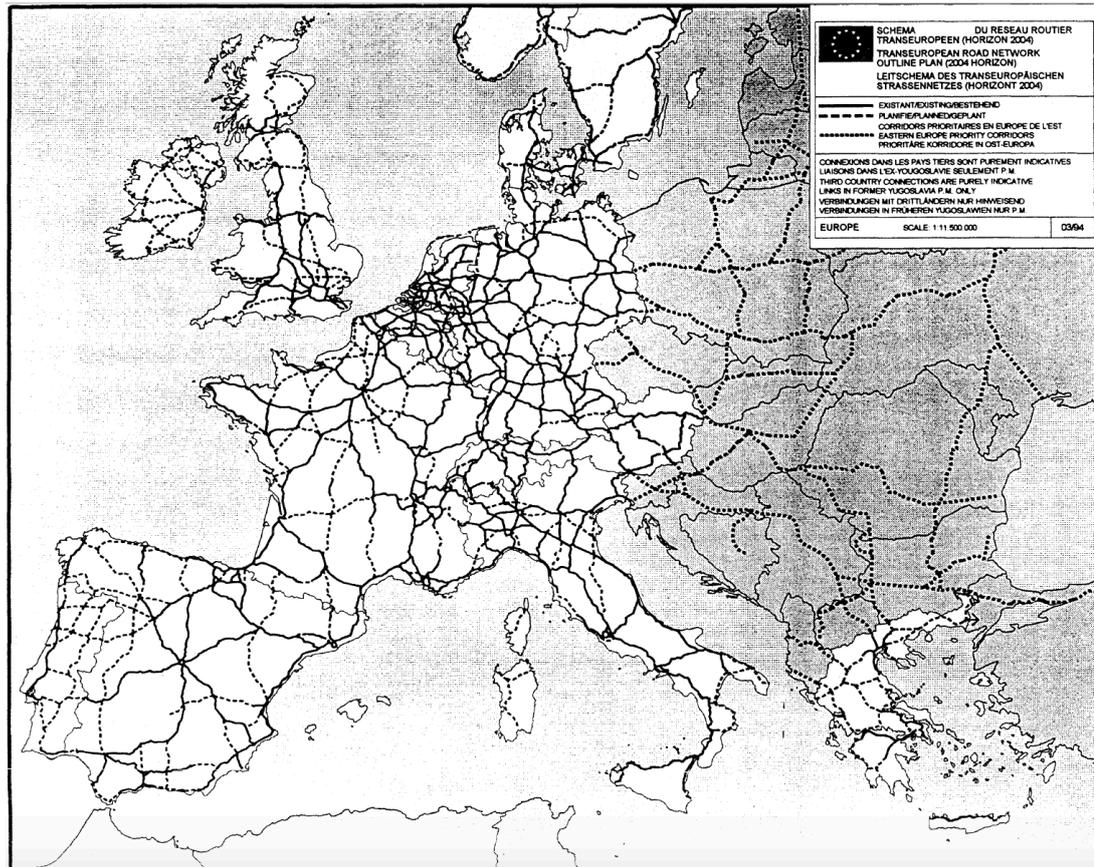
More specifically, the EC proposal for the development of the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) acknowledges that the transport sector would have played a major role for the development of the internal market, as it represents “an important instrument for the cohesion policy of the Community, [ensuring] the flows of goods and persons on the links between the regions and the activity centres of Europe” (EC 1994).

The representation of TEN-T through visual maps provides an appropriate example of such attempt to create and manage space, fostering the following process of homogenisation of the common market and dismantlement of its internal borders. As Pickles writes (2004:5) “Maps and mapping precede the territory they ‘represent’”: the ideation and visual representation of space constitute the first fundamental phase in the process of spatial production (Lefebvre 1991; Schmid 2008). The 1994 EC proposal for the development of TEN-T epitomises this process, projecting and enforcing a particular idealised vision over a territory that was still in the making. In the enclosing map (see Figure 2), the political borders that divide nation states are barely traceable, covered in a crammed web of darker lines that connect the various European countries and stretch even beyond European external borders. The intricate network of existing and planned roads and railways crystallises the ideal fulfilment of a European market, even before the implementation of the Schengen Agreements (which became effective in March 1995) that concretely removed European internal borders.

Hiding behind technically neutral paradigms, logistics unveils political and geo-economic logics, stimulating the openness and expansion of markets and the continuity of networks and flows across and within them (Cowen and N. Smith 2009; Martin 2012; Cowen 2014). In representing and idealising space, projecting a precise political desire onto it, maps are never neutral: they convey power and attempt to bend space to dominant political will (see Foucault 1980; Harley 1989). The visual representation of a unified internal market, without the political borders dividing member states, accomplishes the personification of the EU into a single body. The political and economic unification of the EU, still at its early stages in the mid-1990s, is fulfilled through the complex networks of roads and railways, departing from its beating heart – coinciding with EU’s political centre – and spreading throughout the

European territory like veins and arteries. The bodily representation of Europe is precisely the result of transposing institutional geopolitical desires on paper, as the EC initial communication on TENs suggests:

“The requirements of the functioning of the internal market can be compared to those of a growing organism. It must possess four essential elements: a blood circulatory system (transport infrastructures), a nervous system (telecommunications infrastructures), a muscular system (energy infrastructures) and the cerebral system (training infrastructures)” (EC 1990).



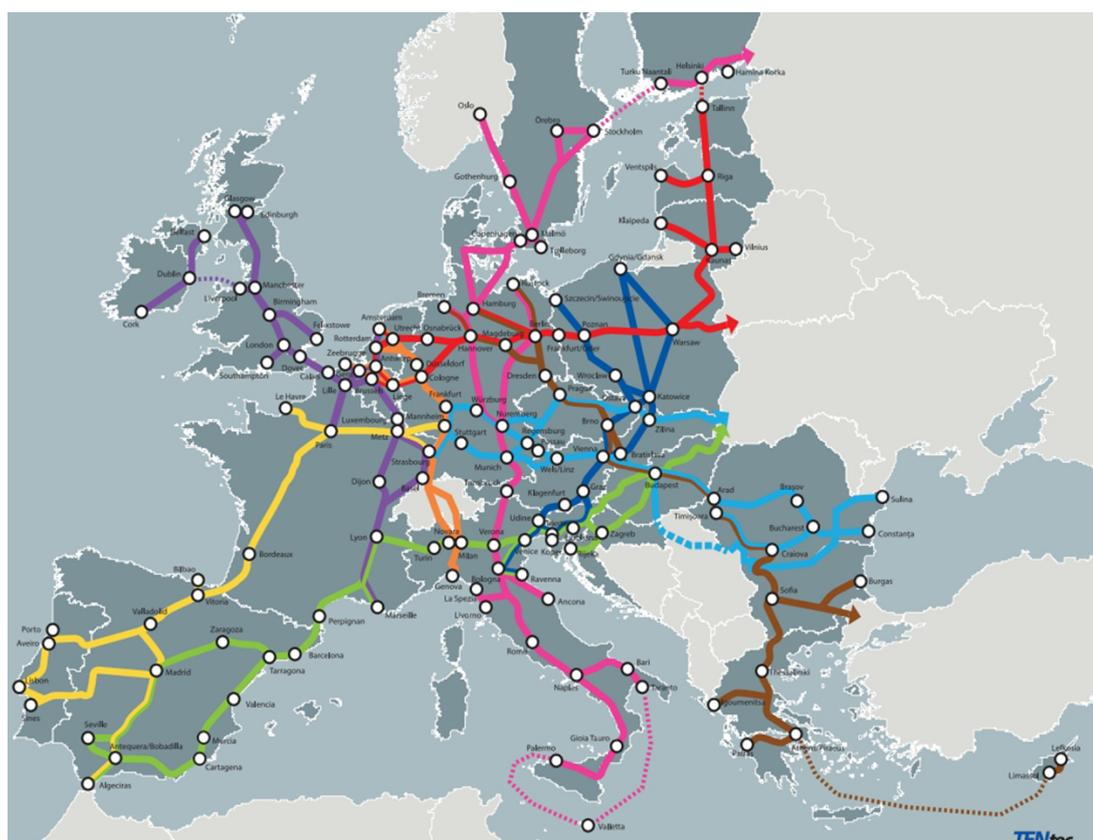
**Figure 2: TEN-T map.**  
**Source: EC proposal COM(94)106.**

With the implementation of TEN-T and the progressive European enlargement, the original design has been extended over a greater space, complicating its management and operation. In the 2014 Progress Report of the European coordinators, the general map for the implementation of the TEN-T (see Figure 3) introduces crucial articulations (the white dots) into the European body, functioning as “spatial fixes” (Harvey 1981, 1985, 1999; Jessop 2006) that aspire to

“close gaps, remove bottlenecks and eliminate technical barriers that exist between the transport networks of EU Member States, strengthening the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union and contributing to the creation

of a single European transport area”<sup>22</sup>.

The creation of nine corridors, established through the 2013 European Regulations No. 1315 and 1316 in order to “streamline and facilitate the coordinated development of the TEN-T Core Network”<sup>23</sup>, reflects the need of controlling and strategically organising space (see Lefebvre 1991; Brenner 1997; Brenner and Elden 2009). In fact, the main purposes of the TEN-T have remained untouched. Depicting an even greater homogeneous and borderless space that extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean and Black Seas, as a result of the process of European enlargement, the map still aims at expanding its influence towards non-European countries, pointing its arrows towards the external space. Cross-border cooperation with third countries is encouraged in the aforementioned 2013 Regulation, which envisages financial and technical support for developing projects of common interest in cooperation with neighbouring countries in order to “ensure seamless traffic flow... between the core network and the transport networks of the third countries, with a view to enhancing economic growth and competitiveness” (European Parliament and Council 2013).



**Figure 3: TEN-T core network corridors.**

**Source: Progress Report of the European coordinators (Grosch 2014).**

<sup>22</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/about-ten-t\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/about-ten-t_en)

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*; see also European Parliament and Council 2013.

The process of homogenisation of European space in the overarching project of the deepening and widening of the European politico-economic integration has neither been always smooth and undisputed, nor has it simply translated into a mere transfer of functions to supra-national institutions. Rather, it has often involved local contestations and negotiations, regional fragmentation, and political de-scaling, due to the emergence of sub-nationalisms, identity claims and rivalries, and ethnic demarcations (Brenner et al. 2003b; R. King and Kendall 2004). The progressive enlargement of the European community to countries that had either previously rejected any form of political union or gravitated towards the Soviet Union has broadened the economic boundaries of its market, integrating southern and eastern European countries “into the orbit of Northern European capital” (Overbeek 2012:34). However, it has also generated a contradictory, uneven, and incomplete development process among states and regions (Hudson 2003). Rather than creating a “super-state” (Hudson 2003; see also Wissel 2014), the EU has developed as a “multi-scalar ensemble of state apparatuses” (Wissel and Wolff 2017:232), where

“National states may be exposed to internal conflicts altering the hierarchies between the various state apparatuses, but the key sites and procedures of political dispute are comparably stable. They are subject to traditions, stronger regulation and, first and foremost, a hegemonic consensus ... [but they] differ fundamentally in their understanding of the EU’s institutional design” (Wissel 2014:500).

Despite the hierarchical attempts to even out the European political and economic space, the latter remains fragmented in a multiplicity of territorial divisions, at both national and regional level, signalling the development of “a ‘new medievalism’ of over-lapping and border-crossing authorities; an ‘empire’ of heterogeneous cultural and economic entities, moving at variable ‘speeds’” (J. Anderson, in Bialasiewicz et al. 2009:86).

#### *The management of migratory movements*

An analysis of the European border and migration regime reveals similar aspects and contradictions. The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam incorporated the Schengen Convention in the *acquis communautaire*, establishing a homogeneous space for mutual cooperation and management in migration and asylum issues among member states at wider European level (H. L. Johnson 2014). The 1999 European Council of Tampere, set up few months after the Treaty’s entry into force, laid the basis for the creation of

a common European policy on migration and asylum, in order to create an “open and secure” EU (art. 4). The dichotomous balance between freedom and security still shapes the foundations of the EU: the establishment of a single market linked through an economic and monetary union, “the major ingredients of a shared area of prosperity and peace” (art. 2), cannot be realised without securing its territory and the mobilities traversing it.

The communitarisation of migration issues does not simply concern the simultaneous openness and closure of European borders for the regulation of migrant flows, but also the management of migrant circulation across and within the European space (Karakayali and Rigo 2010; Tazzioli 2015a). The Schengen and Dublin Conventions do create an external buffer zone, delimited by strengthened security measures, that filters the arrival of migrants from third countries. Yet, they also commingle with a series of European and national policies in the area of migration, citizenship, and labour that produce variegated mobilities and subjects.

For this reason, some authors prefer to talk about a border and migration regime as a complex assemblage of institutions, agents, policies, and procedures that continuously shape borders and reconfigure the mobilities traversing them (Tsianos, Hess, and Karakayali 2009; Karakayali and Rigo 2010; Tsianos and Karakayali 2010; Eule, Loher, and Wyss 2017). Such regime transcends the national boundaries of member states and even the external borders of the EU, branching towards the countries of transit and origin of migrants. Yet, it is not properly European, as the process of communitarisation of migration and asylum issues is still fragmented through the political and legal divisions among member states: as Karakayali and Rigo summarise (2010:134), “the role played by national borders and migration policies has not lost importance but is included in the processes of transforming EU borders”.

The concept of European border and migration regime, I argue, opens up more complex ways to look at borders and mobilities, particularly along two lines: first, it sheds light on the continuous processes of negotiation, contestation, and conflicts among the different actors that interact across borders and, second, it enriches the binary oppositions between openness and closure, de- and re-territorialisation, freedom and security that characterise other conceptualisations of borders. In considering the “turbulent” (Papastergiadis 2000) character of migrant agency in trespassing and transforming bordering practices, the European border and migration regime appears as a disorderly, unpredictable, and ever-changing process, which

mutates according to the evolution of the intertwining relations and struggles between the various actors (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Eule, Loher, and Wyss 2017).

The analysis of the European border and migration regime should therefore move away from the idea of borders as mere territorial lines that divide “good” from “bad” mobilities, looking instead at the widespread proliferation and multifarious manifestations of bordering practices across the European territory, as well as at the numerous mediations and intertwining conflicts that they entail. On the one hand, the European border and migration regime creates a homogeneous yet fragmented supra-national space that regulates the spatio-temporal access and circulation of migrants across and within it through a multiplicity of policies, practices, and procedures. On the other hand, it strives to subsume the “excess” of migration (Andrijasevic 2010), capturing those migrant mobilities that eschew both the criminalisation measures aiming to entrap migrants into a vicious cycle of illegalisation and socio-economic precariousness, and the humanitarian interventions that consider them as passive victims of overwhelming circumstances (Scheel and Squire 2014; Squire 2017).

The analysis of the evolution of the European border and migration regime since the 2000s might help bring to light, I argue, the functioning of the spatio-temporal regulation of migrant mobilities and the attempts to govern their turbulent character. The intertwining FRONTEX operations and CEAS dispositions, in particular, epitomise the necessity of managing migration and border issues in a conjoint way, implementing a unified and coherent system for the reception, identification, acceptance/refusal, and integration/deportation of migrants within the European space. They also show how the uneven development of the European border and migration regime through the fragmentation of policies at national level facilitates the – decelerated and controverted – circulation of migrants across Europe.

The communitarisation of migration and border issues through the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam responded to the need of regulating migratory inflows that were increasingly criminalised, politicised, and restricted. As Karakayali and Rigo argue (2010), whereas the first legal measures adopted by certain European states to manage labour migration since the 1950s were actually forms of regularisation of formerly irregular flows that conceived migrants in purely economic terms, in the same way the illegalisation of migratory movements at the turn of the millennium was a result of their legal regimentation and political hostility, which generated a sharp rise in the

figure of the “refugee” as an administrative category. The “third migratory wave” (Messina 2007; Hollifield, Martin, and Orrenius 2014) that reached the EU in the 1990s was met with increasing social resentment and political aversion. The policies and measures implemented over the past twenty years have not only curtailed the possibilities to enter and work in Europe with legal means while transferring asylum procedures to third countries or institutions abroad (Bigo and Guild 2003, 2010; Bigo 2005; Guild 2006; Hyndman and Mountz 2008; Biondi 2016), but also compelled migrants to disguise themselves as asylum seekers, effacing labour and economic issues under humanitarian discourses (Karakayali and Rigo 2010).

In this context, the Border Agency FRONTEX, the quintessential institution created in 2004 for the control of European external borders, has operated within a humanitarian/securitarian framework that governs the mobilities of people entering the European territory (Pallister-Wilkins 2015; Walters 2012, 2015a). The creation and evolution of FRONTEX does not respond merely to the need of fortifying European external borders or to the necessity of protecting its internal territory. Rather, I argue, its underlying roles and functions are better grasped when subsumed within the same mechanisms that regulate the securitisation of mobility within capitalism, controlling the cross-border flows and preventing undesirable or illicit agents from infiltrating the European space.

The protection of EU external borders, the founding regulation of FRONTEX reminds us, is “a necessary corollary to the free movement of persons within the European Union and a fundamental component of an area of freedom, security and justice” (European Council 2004), especially on the eve of the crucial European enlargement to ten more countries, most of which from the former Soviet Union (Monar 2006; Léonard 2009, 2010). In assisting member states with, *inter alia*, the monitoring of migratory flows, the management of their external borders, the fight against organised cross-border crime and terrorism, and the coordination and organisation of joint operations and rapid border interventions<sup>24</sup>, FRONTEX’s mission exerts its technical know-how and scientific expertise to decipher inherently political questions, striking a balance between European and individual member states’ need for freedom of movement and securitisation of borders (Neal 2009).

However, I contend, the operations of FRONTEX go beyond the mere dichotomy of openness and closure. In the “time-space compression” of border

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<sup>24</sup> <http://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/mission-and-tasks/>

management (Andersson 2014a; see also Jeandesboz 2011), the agency employs a supposedly neutral humanitarian discourse as a governmental technique of border policing, disclosing an intertwining connection between practices of care and control (Ticktin 2005; Pallister-Wilkins 2015). Depicting border crossers as both subjects at risk and risky subjects (Aradau 2004), FRONTEX is appointed with the identification and interdiction of undesirable agents *before* they can actually penetrate and endanger the whole society (Bigo 2005; Neal 2009). In the same way as the revolution in logistics (Cowen 2014), the functions of the agency thus pertain less to the interception and elimination of potential threats than to their evaluation and management (Neal 2009).

The operations that FRONTEX conducts around European external borders do not simply deter and jeopardise migration flows, but also delay or divert the specific moment of their access as “illegals” into the European space. As Hess and Karakayali posit (2018) “Although the border regime can’t stop the movements, it nevertheless is highly productive in transforming the legal status of the people crossing the border, robbing them of the basic right of citizens to have rights by categorizing them into predetermined categories of migration governance”. In the exact moment of surreptitiously crossing the border into Europe, migrants are classified and targeted as “illegal”, and included in the mechanisms of reception, detention, distribution, and deportation that regulate their circulation within the EU (De Genova and Peutz 2010).

As regular labour migrations were increasingly restricted, the ideation of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) at the European Council of Tampere responded, on the one hand, to the gradual employment of the category of “asylum” among migrants to negotiate their access into the EU while, on the other hand, governing migrant mobilities through securitarian and humanitarian practices (Garelli and Tazzioli 2018). Through a complex assemblage of policies and interventions, CEAS has redrawn the spatial geography of asylum, concurrently homogenising the European asylum space and fragmenting it into several asylum systems at national level, and reconfigured the temporal dynamics and procedures that defer, filter, or decelerate migrants’ entrance and circulation in the European territory (Rigo 2005; Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Tsianos and Karakayali 2010; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012).

In the attempt of de-territorialising, externalising, and shifting asylum procedures at wider level, CEAS established common standards for the determination

of member states' responsibilities for the examination of asylum applications, the definition of asylum procedures, the reception of asylum seekers, and the recognition and content of the refugee status (art. 14). Under its umbrella, CEAS regrouped the Dublin Convention, institutionalised under the Council Regulation 2003/343/CE with binding character for all member and candidate states alike, and the aforementioned EURODAC Regulation (EC/2725/2000), which entered into force in 2003. Besides, it promoted the elaboration of other three Council directives that set minimum standards on reception conditions (2003/9/EC), asylum status qualifications (2004/83/EC), and asylum procedures (2005/85/EC). After an initial implementation phase, the CEAS structure was recast in 2013, to supposedly reinforce cooperation, promote solidarity, and improve the harmonisation of asylum legislation among member states<sup>25</sup>.

These directives are deeply interrelated with parallel measures that guarantee a more efficient management of migration flows through a closer cooperation among member states and the arrangement of partnerships with countries of origin and transit dedicated to the exchange of information and mutual assistance, the tackle of illegal immigration, and the advancement of practices of readmission and voluntary return (artt. 11; 22ff.). The combined implementation of such policies and measures has scattered reception centres and detention camps across European and extra-European territories, redrawing the geographies of admission, circulation, and deportation of migrants throughout the EU and beyond (Andrijasevic 2010; Tsianos and Karakayali 2010; see Figure 4).

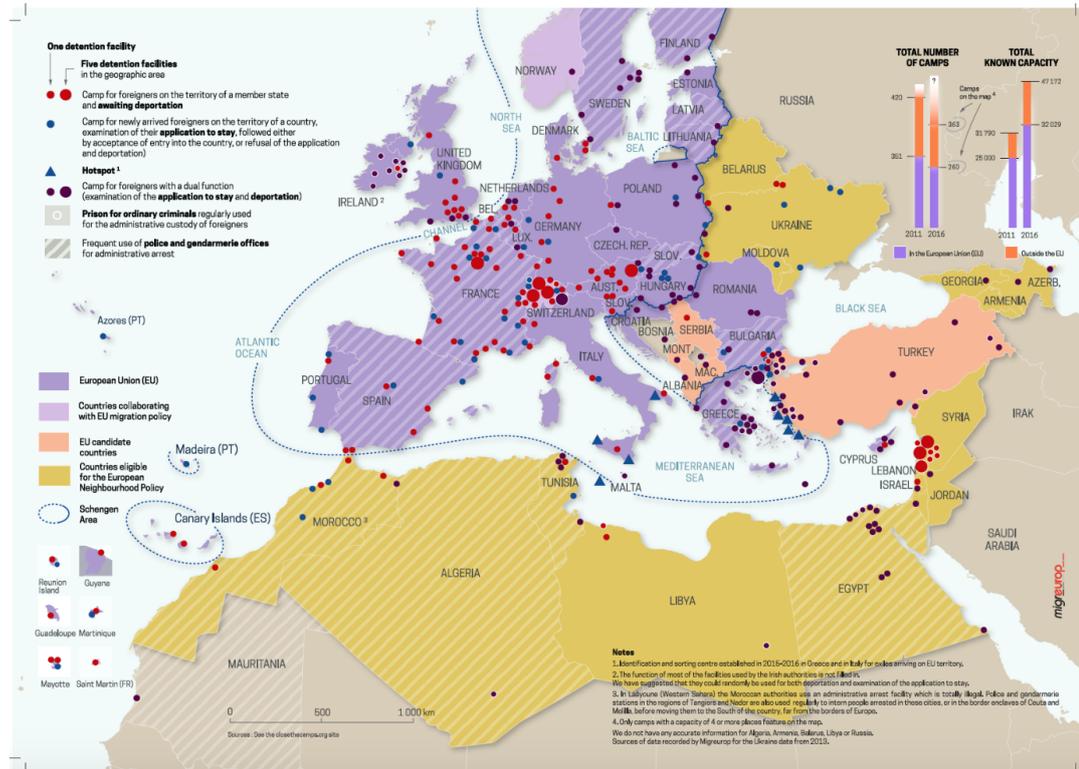
The consolidation of the Dublin and EURODAC systems and the detention measures that migrants often undergo during the examination of their applications<sup>26</sup> impose severe restrictions on the mobility of asylum seekers (see Bloch and Schuster 2005; Hailbronner 2007). This has forced asylum seekers either to withstand enervating waits and bureaucratic lengthiness in their attempt to ask for asylum from outside the EU (Tazzioli 2018), or to fall into illegality and invisibility during their journey to reach it (Czaika and Hobolth 2016). Nevertheless, the detention and confinement measures represent only one step in the process of migrant (im)mobility into and within the EU and should be therefore analysed vis-à-vis the structural framework that regulates migrants' differential inclusion into the European territory

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<sup>25</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum_en)

<sup>26</sup> The detention of asylum seekers is a possibility envisioned by the reception conditions directive, in particular "for legal reasons or reasons of public order" (art. 7.3).

as highly exploitable and disposable workforce (De Genova and Peutz 2010; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).



**Figure 4: The principal spaces of detention in Europe and beyond.**  
Source: Migreurop 2016.

The combined dispositions of CEAS open up to a myriad of interpretations, laws, and practices, *de facto* creating a multiplicity of migration and asylum systems within the EU (Düvell 2011; Dustmann et al. 2017). Rather than harmonising national policies, the definition of common minimum standards has left member states with ample decisional powers for their implementation, according to their national interests and socio-political orientations. The attempt to devise a homogeneous European asylum system has clashed with the heterogeneity of national provisions, resulting in discrepancies among member states in relation to the conditions of reception, procedures, and qualification of asylum status. Emblematic is the significant variation in recognition rates among the various member states for asylum seekers of the same nationality (AIDA 2015a; Dustmann et al. 2017).

The atomisation of the asylum system into several national components has counteracted the primary objective of CEAS of preventing the phenomenon of

“asylum shopping”<sup>27</sup>, stimulating rather than precluding the internal mobility of asylum seekers within the European space (Tazzioli 2015b, 2017a). Increasingly disciplined and controlled, migrant mobilities tend to reject the policed mechanisms of the European border and migration regime, hiding in lorries, concealing in car boots, or camouflaging along arduous and perilous crossings. Increasingly illegalised and criminalised, certain migrants employ illegality as a tactic to escape the tentacular mechanisms of the border regime, refusing to leave visible traces along their passages. Increasingly diluted, extended, endangered, and constrained, the spaces and times of migrant journeys are nonetheless seldom totally blocked.

Among the variegated and multiple intersections of neoliberal/secitarian patterns that regulate the openness and closure of borders, control the access of capital, goods, information, and people within the European territory, and govern their spatio-temporal circulation through logistical infrastructures, something escapes domination and subjection (Mezzadra 2011b, 2015; Hess and Karakayali 2018). Eschewing the securitarian/humanitarian apparatus with its backlash of criminalisation and victimisation of border crossers (Squire 2011, 2017), migrants perform autonomous practices, movements and actions that continuously defy the interwoven tangles of the European border and migration regime, drawing alternative cartographies of mobility. Albeit apparently homogeneous and coherent, such regime acquires variegated configurations, as a result of national distinctions and divergences, as well as of a whole series of grounded interrelations, negotiations, and conflicts among the different actors that constitute and configure it.

### **3.4 Patras as a meeting point**

The port/border area of Patras represents, I argue, an important vantage point from which to observe the numerous and continuous relations, connections, and struggles between neoliberal practices, securitisation measures, and migrants’ autonomy. Located at the crossroad between logistical, commercial, and migrant trajectories, the port/border area of Patras is the “meeting point” of a myriad of threads that originate in distant spaces and times, encounter across the harbour, and then depart again towards other spatial destinations and temporal circumstances. It is the constant intersection, interaction and clash between these variegated threads, I maintain, that

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<sup>27</sup> The asylum shopping refers to the asylum seekers’ intention to reach the territory of the member state where they could obtain the most from their asylum application, in terms of rights and benefits, profiting from the different national dispositions.

has given the port/border area of Patras its peculiar configuration throughout its millennial history.

The contiguous sea has made Patras open towards the outside environment, inclined to commercial trades and cultural exchanges, curious about the known and unknown world. The city developed its distinctive relationship with the sea since the late Mycenaean Period (1580-1100 BC), when the unification of the three villages located in the surrounding hills under the name of Patreas and their first connection with the sea became concrete (Koziori 2010; Mügge n.d.; Petropoulos n.d.). At times, the sea has represented an insurmountable obstacle, and in fact an overwhelming threat, from which the local population needed to be protected in case of enemy attacks. In the following centuries, although remaining prevalently a farming village, Patras expanded its political and strategical importance, becoming a decisive hub that the Corinthians tried to control: for such reasons, during the second part of the Peloponnesian War a long wall was built to protect the city from the attacks and connect it to the port (Mügge n.d.; Petropoulos n.d.; Rizakis and Petropoulos 2006).

The particular relations that tie most seaside cities to the sea do not simply entail a continuous process of openness and closure towards the eternal world, but also involve a multifarious array of networks, flows, and mobilities that traverse them. Since the Roman occupation of the city (146 BC), numerous trade activities and exchanges made the port extend its linkages towards Italy and the rest of the known world. Emblematic was the production and export of clay oil lamps, which made Patras well known at that time (Petropoulos n.d.). Even during the Byzantine era, it is acknowledged that Patras went through flourishing times: the city was an important regional trade centre (Laiou 2002a), its port bustled with carpet and textile trades (Petropoulos n.d.; World Port Source 2005), and the surrounding countryside was already renowned for the cultivation of vine and the production and export of raisin (Laiou 2002b). During the 400-year-long Ottoman rule following the collapse of the relatively autonomous Despotate of Morea in 1460, the Greek commerce and economy preserved its importance, especially in the shipping industry. Patras could benefit from special privileges and a lower taxation regime; however, it never became a major trade centre at least until the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

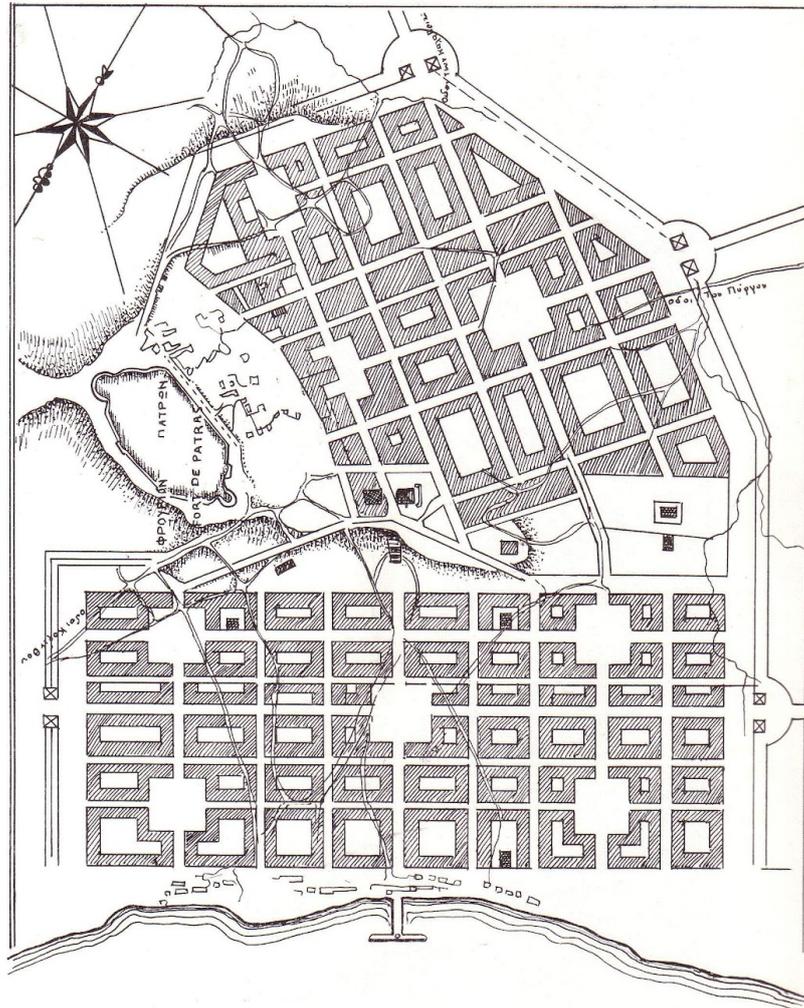
Since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and even more so after the Greek War of Independence, the city and its port became a flourishing crossroads for the circulation of ideas, commodities and people (Katsiardi-Hering 2011; Chatziioannou 2015). The

diffusion of liberal and nationalist ideas sparked an intellectual revival among the communities of the Greek diaspora and the emergent bourgeois class, contributing to the burst of social turmoil against the Ottoman Empire and the introduction of political reforms (Mowbray Clogg, Bowman, and Danforth 1998; Aksan 2007; Agoston and Masters 2009). In March 1821, from a local chapel in Patras the Greek rebels officially proclaimed the revolt against the Ottoman domination, conquering soon significant portions of Peloponnese and Attica (Jelavich 1983). The Ottoman army triggered a violent counteraction, taking back control over Greece between 1824 and 1826. The 1827 battle of Navarino, with the decisive and long-awaited support of British, French, and Russian navies, represented a turning point in the Greek War of Independence, leading to the destruction of the Ottoman fleet and the final victory for the Greeks, which proclaimed their independence in 1830.

The established Kingdom of Greece, “the first of the newly formed nation states of Europe to win full sovereignty and international recognition” (Beaton 2009:1), was initially composed of the current regions of Peloponnese, Attica, Central and Western Greece. Its population amounted to 800,000 inhabitants, although about 2,5 million Greeks were still living under the Ottoman empire (Sowards 1996). At that time, Patras was a town of few thousand people gathered around the castle on the hill, but with limited urban connections to the seafront. Soon after its liberation in 1828, Governor Kapodistrias appointed a French army engineer, Stamatis Voulgaris, to design the first urban plan of Patras, in the attempt of reconstructing the city after almost 10 years of conflicts. The plan envisaged the extension of the city towards the sea, with the creation of a geometrically structured neighbourhood between the castle and the seafront, and the gradual enlargement of the port (see Figure 5).

Drawing upon Lefebvre’s analysis of spatial production, Schmid writes, “space cannot be perceived as such without having been conceived in thought previously” (2008:39). The outward expansion envisioned in the original plan projected the city and its port at regional and European level, constituting a remarkable benchmark for their future combined development. The cultivation and commercialisation of Corinthian raisin, the main agricultural commodity of the region, boosted the local economy and contributed to the development of the port of Patras, the then first port of Greece preceding Piraeus and Syros (Sarafopoulos 2008). The threads departing from the port of Patras scattered all around Europe: the main destinations of raisins were London and Trieste, which swallowed up more than 85% of this product’s export

even before the liberation of the city, followed by Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Livorno (*ibid.*).



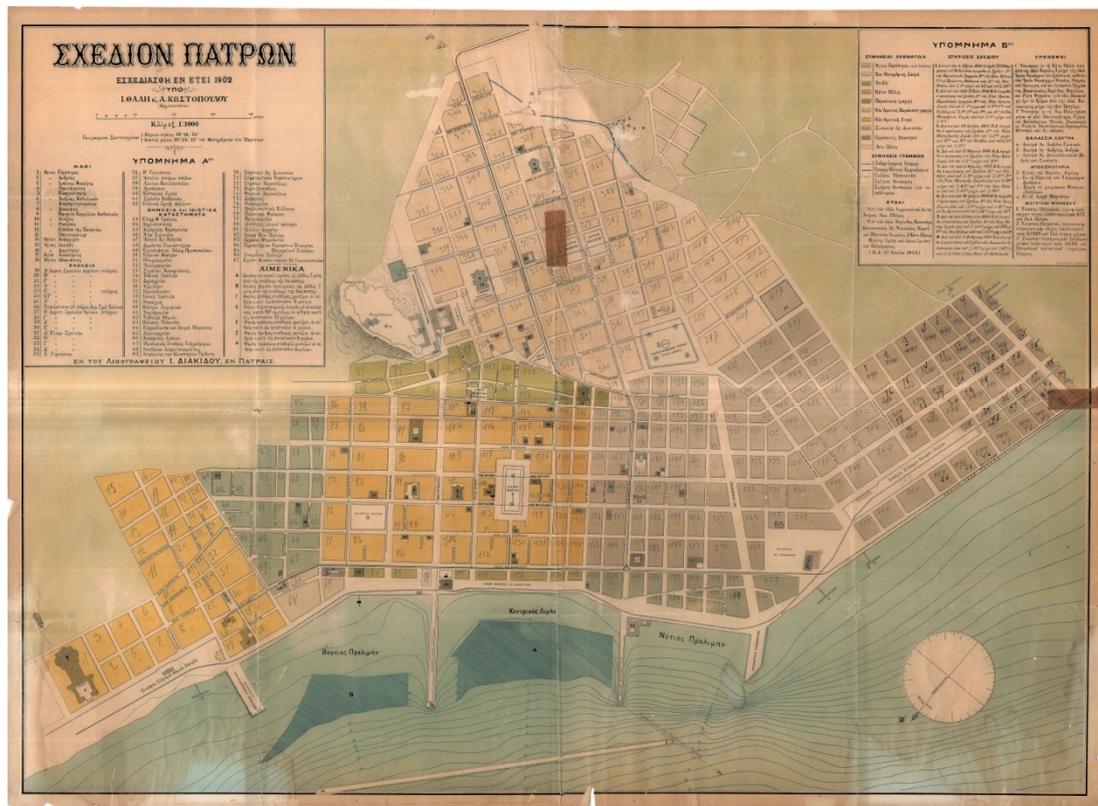
Τὸ πρῶτο ρυμοτομικὸν σχέδιον τῆς πόλεως Πατρῶν, τὸ ὁποῖον με ἐντολὴ τοῦ Κυβερνήτου Καποδίστρια, ἐσχεδίασεν ὁ Σταμάτης Βουλγαρῆς τὸ 1829. Τὸ σχέδιον αὐτὸ μετὰ ἀπὸ πολλὰς μετατροπὰς ἀπετέλεσεν τὴν βᾶσιν τοῦ σημερινοῦ τοῦ ὁποῖου ἡ πολεοδομικὴ διαμόρφωσις συνεχῶς ἐπεκτείνεται.

**Figure 5: The first urban plan of Patras, designed by Voulgaris in 1829.**

Source: <http://lyrasi.blogspot.co.uk/2012/07/blog-post.html>.

For about four decades after the independence, a symbiotic relationship evolved among the regional environment, the urban socio-economic fabric, and the port. The thriving raisin market prompted the proliferation of satellite activities along the coastal area, dedicated either to the packaging or to the distillation of surplus raisins. The port of Patras contributed massively to the economic development of the region, operating as a strategic trade hub for both the export of agricultural products, and the import of consumption goods (such as tobacco, sugar, and coffee) and raw materials for construction and the industry (World Port Source 2005). Towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup>

century, the port underwent major works for its enlargement, in conjunction with the expansion of the city towards the sea as envisioned in the original urban plan (Sarafopoulos 2008; see also Figure 6).



**Figure 6: City Plan of Patras, year 1902.**

**All the wharfs are visible. From left to right: Astiggos, Nikolau, Kalavryton and the Meridian piers.**

**Source: Courtesy of the Department of Urban Planning of the Municipality of Patras; Maps published in the book “Maps’ Memories, Patras 1831-1943” (in Greek).**

Other distant threads seemed nonetheless to affect such idyllic relationship. The completion of the Suez Canal in 1869 and of the Corinth Canal in 1893 fostered the development of the port of Piraeus, which was nonetheless still disconnected from the city of Athens. In the last breaths of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of a general economic crisis at national and European level, the raisin trade started to decline, causing severe problems to the regional agricultural development and the port activities (Balta 2000). The simultaneous downfall of the raisin trade and of the satellite activities orbiting around it ruined several commercial enterprises and pauperised many families. Given the scarce diversification of commodity production and export (H. Hesse 2008; De Benedictis, Gallegati, and Tamberi 2009), the raisin trade shock represented a crushing blow for the whole region, leading to mass unemployment and emigration (Tsokopoulos 2006). Estimates tell that about a sixth of the Greek population left the country between 1893 and 1914 (Kasimis and Kassimi 2004), drawing migratory patterns towards the USA, Canada, and Australia. The

Greek emigration, protracting with reduced numbers and different waves throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and until the 1960s, reshaped the configuration of the port-city, which became known as “the gate to the West”.

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the development of industrial activities in Patras, which partly absorbed the outgoing migration and attenuated the decline of the raisin trade. The surroundings of the city became populated with new industries, which could strategically benefit from the proximity with the port, the connection with the newly built railway, and the abundance of water, fundamental for many of those activities. The textile complex of Peiraiki-Patraiki, the Ladopoulos paper mill, the AVEX wood factory, and the VESO distillery, among others, appeared in the early decades of the century, changing the industrial and geographical landscape of the city.

After the demographic and social problems caused by WWI and the following Greco-Turkish war, in the interwar period the socio-economic fabric of Patras was interwoven again: industrial activities resumed, the raisin trade got back on its feet even though on a smaller scale, and the port recovered and increased its freight traffic, prompting the economic development of the city (Sotiropoulos 1993; Tsokopoulos 2006). The advent of WWII and the immediate burst of the civil war, though, precipitated Patras and the whole Greece into a period of social and economic despair, engendering another wave of Greek emigration towards northern Europe, Australia, and the USA (Kasimis and Kassimi 2004).

Activities in the port of Patras resumed in the 1960s with renovated spatial configurations. The Adriatic Sea emerged as an important corridor for goods and passengers, and the first ferry lines to and from Italy began to operate (Sotiropoulos 1993). Despite its transition into a RO/RO-PAX hub for general trade and passenger traffic<sup>28</sup>, the port managed to maintain strict connections with the economic, industrial and social fabric of the city, resulting in a twenty-year-long period of harmony (Tsokopoulos 2006:54). The development of the ferry transport and the increasing port traffic led to the construction of the northern pier, the marina, and the fishery in 1978. As the port traffic increased, environmental and traffic problems in the city centre emerged, leading to the first discussions for the expansion of the whole port. Besides, the reshaping of the geographies of production and distribution of capital and goods

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<sup>28</sup> RO/RO-PAX is the technical acronym referring to those ports that expresses the possibility for the ferryboats to perform roll-on and roll-off facilities for lorries and cars, and to carry passengers.

at global level and the parallel process of deepening and widening of the European market opened up new geopolitical and socio-economic scenarios for Patras.

The advent of neoliberal globalisation represented a turning point for the industrial development of the city and the future of its port. The global relocation of productive activities from the capitalist centres to developing countries had profound repercussions on the socio-economic life of Patras and the whole of Greece. Despite governmental attempts to rescue economic activities through the 1985 Industrial Reconstruction Organisation, several factories were forced to close, leading to a period of high unemployment and economic stagnation. The 2008 economic crisis, reverberation of the neoliberal reconfiguration of capitalist accumulation at worldwide scale (Harvey 2011b; Fouskas and Dimoulas 2013), has inflicted the fatal blow on the socio-economic pattern of the city, leading to the destruction of industrial and commercial activities.

As a general tendency in advanced capitalist countries, the city has since the 1980s developed around the tertiary sector, driven by the University of Patras, Greece's third largest university, and the General University Hospital, one of the biggest in the country, closely connected to the University's School of Medicine. Since the process of de-industrialisation, the port of Patras has almost completely abandoned freight activities and lost its integral connection with the socio-economic life of the city and its surroundings, developing on a single-dimensional basis for the circulation of passengers and lorries. Whereas the northern part of the city thrives with recently affirmed and innovative services, the southern periphery still languishes from the never-ending economic crisis. Despite some municipal attempts to revive the area, the skeletons of the old factories linger on just in front of the new port, now populated by dozens of migrants determined to sneak under lorries and reach other destinations.

For most of them, the port of Patras has come to represent a contemporary gate to other European countries. The migratory routes that connect Central Asia and the Middle East with central and northern European countries seem to mirror the pathway traced by regional supply chains, although with different spatio-temporal dynamics (see Figure 7). Trapped in a country where most of them refuse to claim asylum, migrants have established in Patras their temporary hub through which potentially continue their journey towards Italy and the rest of Europe. In the context of spatio-temporal de- and re-construction of barriers to the worldwide mobility of flows, the spatiality of migrant settlement and mobility simultaneously intertwines and clashes

with the logistical operations of the port aiming to enhance and accelerate the circulation of certain flows, and the exacerbation of border controls that prevents the access of other flows within the European and Greek territory (see Cowen 2010, 2014).



**Figure 7: Migrant routes through Greece.**  
Source: Human Rights Watch 2013.

The multiple flows and connections intersecting the port/border area of Patras, I argue, have engendered a “meeting point” where migrants constantly negotiate their presence – not without conflicts – within the host society vis-à-vis the dominant imperatives of neoliberalism, with its logic of open and secure borders, and the repressive apparatus of the European border and migration regime. Standing at the port/border area of Patras, these processes become visible, continuously interplaying, negotiating, and confronting with each other. Far from being predetermined and homogeneous, the spatio-temporal interrelations and conflicts between these variegated moments, I maintain, constantly craft the everyday life of and around the port/border area.

The following three chapters will be dedicated to the analysis of the multifarious connections and conflicts between neoliberal practices, securitisation measures and migration policies, and migrants’ autonomy in the port/border area of Patras. While global capitalism has tended to demolish borders to guarantee the unbounded

circulation of capital, goods, and travellers, European and national security policies have operated to safeguard these logistical networks, erecting checkpoints and barriers within and outside national territories. Migrants' flows have intruded and challenged the dominant spaces of capitalism and security, creating alternative spaces of refuge and transit. These different processes have not only constantly engaged, negotiated and confronted with each other, but they have also developed in an uneven way, giving the port/border area of Patras its unique configuration. The combined reading of these three fieldwork-based chapters, therefore, will provide a comprehensive understanding of the various processes unfolding in the port/border area of Patras and of the conceptual meaning of borders as "meeting points".

## 4 Border connections

“Always on time”  
“Transport is our profession”  
“Just in time”  
“Dedicated to deliver”  
“Μεταφέρουμε τα πάντα παντού! Wir transportieren alles überall!” (We transport everything everywhere!)

Some of the slogans depicted on the lorries waiting to embark at Patras port, 08/09/2017.

The progress of speed is nothing other than the unleashing of violence.

Paul Virilio 2006, *Negative Horizon*.

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to critically analyse how the capitalist tendency to dismantle spatio-temporal barriers – particularly visible in its neoliberal phase (see Harvey 1989, 2005) – has shaped the port/border area of Patras, promoting the increasing and increasingly faster circulation of capital, goods, and people through the development of logistical network. Far from advocating or simply delineating the idea of a “borderless world”, the chapter will highlight the political-economic specificities of the port/border area of Patras through time, as well as the grounded practices that have negotiated with, confronted, or openly resisted neoliberalism. Three interconnected presuppositions will drive such analysis and eventually sustain the development of this chapter.

Neoliberalism, first, is here conceived as a series of dynamics and processes that, starting from the 1980s, have reconfigured the production, distribution and consumption mechanisms at global level, as well as the political, economic and social organisation of nation states (Harvey 2005; Fouskas and Gökay 2019). The development of logistics has certainly had a major role within neoliberalism – and indeed it will be amply discussed in this chapter; yet, the focus on neoliberalism will allow to look at other processes that have occurred in parallel with it, such as the privatisation of state economic sectors or the delocalisation of productive activities. Second, neoliberalism is not conceived as a homogeneous and overwhelming force, but as a constantly changing process that involves contradictions, negotiations and struggles at multiple levels (Peck and Tickell 2002; N. Smith 2008; Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010). It does not unfold in a predictable, monotonous, or linear way but tends to assume different declinations in different contexts. Rather than flattening space, neoliberalism has constantly modified its spatial objectives and reworked its

economic interests, engendering uneven and sometimes detrimental consequences. Third, and strictly related, neoliberalism represents one, yet inescapable, amongst the different social forces shaping borders, deeply intermingled with concerns for securitisation that compel states to regulate the opening of their borders to commercial and financial exchanges while at the same time protecting them (Nevins 2002; Andreas 2003, 2009; Coleman 2005).

On these bases, the chapter will argue that the analysis of the logistical multimodal transport network that traverses Patras is fundamental not just within the overarching examination of the neoliberal tendency to demolish spatio-temporal barriers, but also in the production and continuous transformation of borders themselves. By standing at the border, the multiple maritime, rail, and road connections surrounding, converging at, and departing from Patras appear to have a primary role in configuring its port/border area. Coherently with the above presuppositions, the chapter will also maintain that the development of logistics has not unfolded in a clear and homogeneous way, but through continuous interrelations, negotiations, and struggles over space, which gave the port/border area of Patras its unique character.

In the attempt to capture the multi-scalar processes that have unfolded in the port/border area of Patras and the particular configuration that the latter has acquired, the chapter adopts several intertwining gazes. With the usage of a wide-angle lens, it will analyse the development of the port of Patras as a “bridge” (O’Dowd 2002) between the geopolitical and socio-economic forces that have unwound in and from there. It will look in particular at the widespread logistical system of networks, connections, and interactions at and around the port area of Patras, and at their role in producing a homogeneous space in the context of the European borderless market. Lefebvre (1991) defines this constitutive moment of the process of spatial production as “spatial practices”, i.e. “the material dimension of social activity and interaction... [the] networks of interaction and communication as they arise in everyday life (e.g., daily connection of residence and workplace) or in the production process (production and exchange relations)” (Schmid 2008:36). Under capitalism, spatial practice “propounds and presupposes it [social space], in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it” (Lefebvre 1991: 38).

The chapter will then restrict the depth of focus, assessing the uneven development of Patras and the role of, and the intricate relationships between, the

various institutional actors involved in the spatial planning of the city. A second moment of the process of spatial production, what Lefebvre calls “representations of space”, will be taken into consideration: these are conceptualisations, images, designs and plans over space as conceived by “scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers.... This is the dominant space in any society” (*ibid.*). Architects, planners and geographers contribute with maps, projects, and ideas to the production of space, by filling social space “with a knowledge... - i.e. a mixture of understanding... and ideology - which is always relative and in the process of change... subject to revision” (Lefebvre 1991:41).

Representations of space are objective and abstract but have practical effects in the socio-political context in which they operate. In Patras, the multiplicity of actors involved in this process of spatial fragmentation has contributed to raise numerous legal, technical, and political issues, without guaranteeing a better control and management of spatial relations. In outlining the interactions and conflicts between the different actors in the implementation of planning laws and infrastructural policies, this part will investigate the distinctive processes and dynamics that have turned Patras from a major node within the European logistical network into a secondary hub along the Adriatic corridor.

The last part of the chapter will zoom in on the people, evaluating how local institutions, workers, and inhabitants have experienced, confronted, or resisted the spatial changes occurring in the port area (the specific role of migrants in developing their own counter-geographies of settlement and mobility will be discussed more thoroughly in the last chapter). This specific process corresponds to the third moment of production of space, what Lefebvre terms “spaces of representation”. Representational spaces pertain to the “symbolic dimension of space” (Schmid 2008:37), the “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, ...the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 1991:39, his emphasis). This section will not only analyse the practices of negotiation, contestation, and conflicts that neoliberalism has encountered during its evolution, but it will also unravel the alternative measures that ordinary people have adopted or built in order to mitigate, negotiate, or resist the dominant logics of neoliberalism. In so doing, it will eventually disclose the peculiar characteristics that the port/border area of Patras has acquired throughout its uneven and tension-ridden development, as a result of the situated and exclusive

circumstances that have therein materialised.

By grasping the three simultaneous facets of the process of spatial production and the intertwining connections between them, the chapter will place the first brick in the construction and delineation of the concept of borders as “meeting points”, critically investigating how logistics has crafted the port/border area of Patras in the attempt to produce a homogeneous space for the circulation of capital, commodities, and people. The production of a relatively fixed infrastructural configuration should have facilitated the continuous acceleration and expansion of variegated mobilities (Harvey 2001; Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006). However, the research will point out how recent multi-scalar changes have actually impeded the development of Patras port in such sense. The unfolding and interweaving of geopolitical, economic, and logistical processes, combined with their negotiations and confrontations at local level, have affected the spatial development of the port, contributing to its current uneven configuration.

## **4.2 Homogeneous, fragmented and hierarchical spaces**

The tendencies towards homogenisation and differentiation, Neil Smith reminds us (2008:122), “emanate side by side in the belly of capitalism”, generating uneven patterns of spatial development. In other words, “Unevenness over space is not a mere sidebar to how capitalism works, but is fundamental to its reproduction” (Hadjimichalis 2011:255; see also Hudson 2005; Harvey 2011a). Being “at once a product of the capitalist mode of production and an economico-political instrument of the bourgeoisie” (Lefebvre 1991:129), capitalist space discloses here a blatant contradiction: it is homogeneous, as it tends to reduce differences and guarantee ex- and inter-changeability of places, making it monotonous and repetitive; fractured, as it must be sold in lots and parcels to be controlled and to ensure its practical use; hierarchised, as it engenders inequalities and exacerbates power relations between centres and peripheries (Lefebvre 1991; Brenner and Elden 2009).

The process of homogenisation of European space can be read neither as a unidirectional operation to tear down national barriers, nor as a mere relocation of state prerogatives to sub- and supra-national institutions for the creation and enlargement of a single market. Rather, it implies a parallel and more complex process of spatial fragmentation in order to guarantee and enhance the control and management of the market itself. In this process, states still have great powers and

responsibilities on their hands, as they can prevent an excessive fragmentation of space, and use violence to impose its operational and totalising rationality of capital accumulation and political unification over a determinate territory (Lefebvre 1991). Moreover, they possess and manage the necessary financial resources, bureaucratic apparatuses, and legal capabilities to organise spatial activities at larger scales (Lefebvre 1991; Brenner 2008).

The examination of the Greek spatial planning framework provides an excellent point of departure to capture the manifold, intertwining, and at times conflicting relations among different agents involved in the production of the port of Patras' space. The Greek system contemplates several levels of spatial planning, fulfilled by national, regional, and municipal institutions. At each level, multiple entities perform different tasks and maintain certain fixed relationships, making the system highly stratified and rather complicated (Delladetsima 2012). This system is being confronted by administrative and institutional reforms, especially after the burst of the crisis, and by the influence of European policies, which went in the direction of a "truly neoliberal orientation" (Vatavali and Zifou 2012:1; see also Serrao, Gianniris, and Zifou 2005; Souliotis and Alexandri 2017).

At national level, spatial planning is entrusted to eight ministries, two governmental bodies, and the judiciary power, in the figure of the Council of State, which establishes "judicial standards for the interpretation of the domestic, community and international legislation concerning the sustainable development perspective" (Serrao, Gianniris, and Zifou 2005:1). In terms of spatial planning, the relevant Ministry "elaborates, approves and implements urban master plans, statutory town plans, housing plans ... [and is] responsible for the elaboration, monitoring, evaluation and revision of national and regional strategic spatial plans" (SPECIAL Knowledge Pool 2008). The two main instruments at their disposal are the General and the Special Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development. The former provides "the general guidelines for the organisation, management and development of the national territory" (Serrao, Gianniris, and Zifou 2005:3), concerning economic axes, transportation poles, and technical infrastructures of national interest. The latter regards specific issues, sectoral activities, or special areas of national interests (*ibid.*).

Despite the attempts of promoting decentralisation and deregulation, the state has maintained political and juridical competencies for the implementation of public policies of national interests (Brenner et al. 2003b; Brenner 2004). The authority of

the state is directly envisaged in the Greek Constitution, which explicitly declares that the “delegation of legislation power is allowed only if it happens by parliamentary act and only if it refers to ‘special matters’ or ‘subjects of detailed or technical character or of local interest’ (Art. 43 par. 2)” (Hlepas 2012:9). Accordingly, the Council of State has officially sanctioned the role of the state, rejecting “the delegation of new responsibilities from the state to local government, whenever these responsibilities refer to ‘important sectors of public policy’, which are assigned, by the constitution itself, exclusively to the state (e.g. physical planning, environmental protection, or the status of teachers in public schools)” (*ibid.*:10). In other words, “According to the Greek Constitution, spatial planning at any territorial level is the responsibility of the State” (SPECIAL Knowledge Pool 2008).

At sub-national level, the management and implementation of spatial planning policies have intertwined with the Kapodistrias (Law 2539/1997) and Kallikratis (Law 3852/2010) administrative reforms, which have progressively decentred important state functions, while enlarging regional and local institutions. With regard to spatial planning, the main instruments in the hands of the regions are the Regional Territorial Plan (RTP), the Special Spatial Plan (SSP), and the Regulatory Plan (RP). RTPs deal with “the development and spatial structure of the Region, taking into account its placement in the international, European and national context, as well as its competitive advantages” (Serraos, Gianniris, and Zifou 2005:4). SSPs concern particular “areas to be protected outside the statutory town plans” (SPECIAL Knowledge Pool 2008): despite their special character, Patras is included in one of them for the presence of the Rio-Antirrio Bridge<sup>29</sup>. The RPs are General Master Plans for metropolitan areas and urban agglomerations, which “provide the guidelines for General Urban Plans” (SPECIAL Knowledge Pool 2008).

At local level, the most important spatial planning instruments are the General Urban Plans (GUPs) and the Plans of Spatial and Settlement Organisations for Open Cities, followed by a series of urban and rural plans that concern more specifically rural areas, towns and their neighbourhoods. The GUP “has to cover the whole area of the municipality, providing the general guidelines for its spatial development” (Serraos, Gianniris, and Zifou 2005:5). Among the objectives of the GUP are the definition of land uses, the outline of planning framework for the urban development and its equipment with production infrastructure, and the indication of potential

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<sup>29</sup> Semi-structured interview with Prof. Pappas, 26/05/2015.

special zones within the plan area (Tosics et al. 2010:150). Despite concerning municipal areas, GUPs

“are produced by private consultants or, in exceptional circumstances, by government departments, in accordance with a government brief. Public participation must be secured (e.g. through public meetings) at the stage of plan production, but individual citizens have no opportunity for formal objections” (EC 2000a).

Whereas local authorities have only an advisory role in the production and approval of statutory plans, they have more responsibilities at a regulatory level, “with the delivery of building permits and other licenses and the implementation of town plans” (ESPON 2015; see also EC 2000a; SPECIAL Knowledge Pool 2008). The Town Plan (TP) “is a regulatory administrative act granting development rights”, as it determines “street alignments, building lines and land-use designations” (EC 2000a), covering a whole variety of studies and zoning plans with a local coverage. Once these studies, which have to abide by the GUP, receive the necessary approval, they become the official TP with binding dispositions (Serraos, Gianniris, and Zifou 2005).

Despite the presence of corruption, bureaucratic conflicts, and widespread informal settlements at all levels (see Vatavali and Zifou 2012; Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou 2015), the Greek planning system remains a top-down initiative, characterised by a “multiplicity of laws and regulations, [and the] predominance of a centralized, regulatory and hierarchical planning style” (Giannakourrou, cited in Berdavs et al. 2012:15). The hierarchical structure presumes that lower authorities have to comply with spatial plans approved at higher levels, giving local institutions little degree of autonomy in planning issues (Berdavs et al. 2012). The reforms introduced in the 1980s, which aimed at involving local authorities in the participation into the planning system, have been *de facto* frustrated by the Council of State. Its decisions “have gradually subtracted powers conceded to municipal and prefecture government institutions, leaving with them a consulting role” (Economou and Papamichos 2003, cited in Delladetsima 2012:12). As Tosics et al. (2010:148) put it:

“The spatial planning system, particularly as manifested in town planning legislation, remains... predominantly focused on land use, with only minor attention to strategic and development dimensions. Change takes place elsewhere, especially in government action, which bypasses the established land use system, as in the case of large projects, e.g. for the Olympic Games, in economic development policy, in the emergence of ad hoc agencies, in local initiatives, in citizen mobilization and growing awareness, and in the rising consciousness of hitherto neglected issues, e.g. environmental problems. The

end-result is a rather patchy picture, in which the official land use planning system is the most backward piece of the puzzle.”

The reception of European policies on spatial planning and sustainable development have contributed to shift the attention from physical planning, which refers mainly to land uses and ownership (EC 2000a; ESPON 2015), to strategic planning that could foster the economic development and the international role of the country within the EU. Despite the absolute and relative importance of EU funds and the reforms of the administrative system which facilitated their reception (Leonardi 2005; Chorianopoulos 2012; Souliotis and Alexandri 2017), the prospect of enhancing the strategic position of Greece through the development of the necessary transport, energy, communication, and infrastructure network has turned out to be less efficient than expected, because of Greece’s peripheral “location in relation to the main ‘locus’ of the European space” (Serraos, Gianniris, and Zifou 2005:9).

The burst of the economic crisis and the austerity policies that followed have intensified the problems related to spatial planning, further exacerbating its neoliberal character (Vatavali and Zifou 2012; Hadjimichalis 2014; Souliotis and Alexandri 2017). The main objectives of post-crisis spatial planning reforms were “the simplification, acceleration and minimization of planning and permitting procedures and the ‘modernization’ of the administrative system by promoting the suppression of corruption and the reduction of bureaucracy”, as well as “the consolidation of flexibility and certainty for the implementation of large scale private investments” (Vatavali and Zifou 2012:4). However, after 2010 this route was suddenly diverted, and priority was given

“to reduced planning controls as an ad hoc incentive to attract major investment and in parallel to the legalization of: a) building by-laws violations ... by the owners-contractors and b) ... illegal constructions as a means of meeting urgent fiscal needs” (Delladetsima 2012:15).

In the following paragraphs, the detailed analysis of the historical and spatial development of port, rail, and road infrastructures (see also Annex 1 at the end of this chapter) will give some sense of the neoliberal orientation of the Greek spatial planning framework, the role of the sub- and supra-national institutions involved, and the intertwining relations among them. The examination of “the spatio-temporal practices of commercial logistics” (Martin 2012:359) will provide, I argue, the metaphorical and practical joining link between the different scales of analysis,

simultaneously connecting the local to the global while enforcing hegemonic practices over territories and mobilities (Cowen 2010, 2014; Martin 2012). In its attempt of shaping space according to the dominant rationality of capitalism, logistics encounters nonetheless frictions, oppositions, and resistances that bring about uneven spatial development. With this in mind, the following sections will disassemble the different logistical networks vis-à-vis the neoliberal changes in the European space, analysing their historical and current developments at and across different scales, as well as the particular spatial configuration they have acquired in the port/border area of Patras.

### **4.3 The port system: a neoliberal turn**

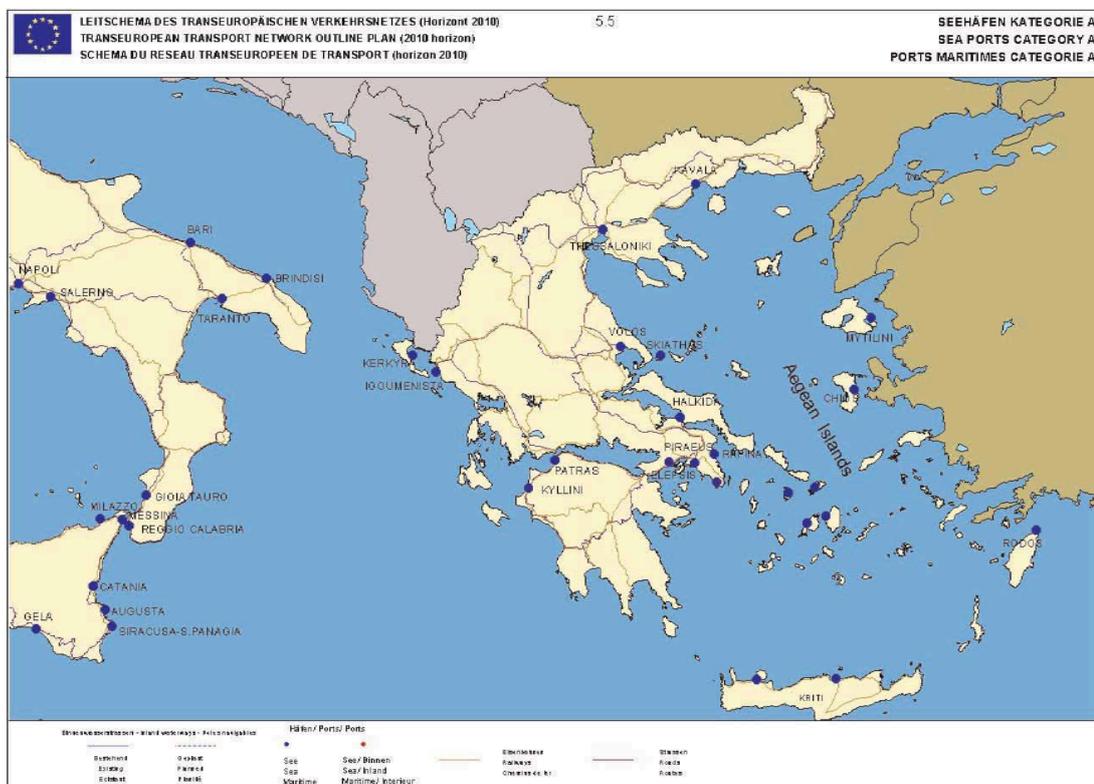
#### *Competitiveness*

With the relocation of production in developing countries and the extension of supply chains at global level, ports have acquired increasing importance in transnational commodity flows, turning into strategic nodes that aim to reduce spatio-temporal barriers between the productive sites and the consumption markets (Heyman 2004). As global and regional networks became increasingly interconnected, ports could no longer be conceived as independent hubs, but rather as interrelated links within the neoliberal transformation of worldwide systems of production and distribution (Notteboom and Winkelmanns 2001; Robinson 2002; Olivier and Slack 2006; Mangan, Lalwani, and Fynes 2008). For this reason, some authors propose the idea of a “port system”, in order to capture the relevance of specific ports not only within global and regional supply chains, but also among intermodal transport networks (Notteboom and Rodrigue 2005; Jacobs and Notteboom 2011; Ng et al. 2014).

In line with the spatial reconfiguration of production and distribution, these ports have been susceptible to neoliberal reforms, such as privatisation, competitiveness, standardisation, and logistical integration (Notteboom and Winkelmanns 2001; Robinson 2002; Olivier and Slack 2006; Cowen 2014). Following a neoliberal rationale, competitiveness has become one of the key criteria to assess the importance of the different maritime networks. Competitiveness does not relate to the single ports, but to the whole logistical networks underlying them: in other words, “Chains compete, not individual ports” (Robinson 2002:250; see also Notteboom, Ducruet, and De Langen 2009; Jacobs and Notteboom 2011).

The most visible transformations have occurred in container seaports, which play a major role in global logistical networks and supply chains. However, neoliberal

dynamics have also affected regional contexts and reshaped small- and medium-sized ports, making them increasingly interconnected within the regional and European space. For this reason, even the port of Patras can be considered part of a “port system”<sup>30</sup> for its role within the Greek and European transport networks and, more specifically, in the lower Adriatic Sea. The founding law of the TEN-T (Decision No. 1692/1996/EC of the European Parliament and Council 1996) officially sanctioned its importance, by including Patras among the category A seaports, for its international relevance and potential contribution to the development of the European intermodal transport (see Figure 8). Together with that of Igoumenitsa, the port of Patras acquires an important role in the regional traffic, being at the extremity of the railway and road corridors that connect Greece to central Europe via the eastern Balkan countries.



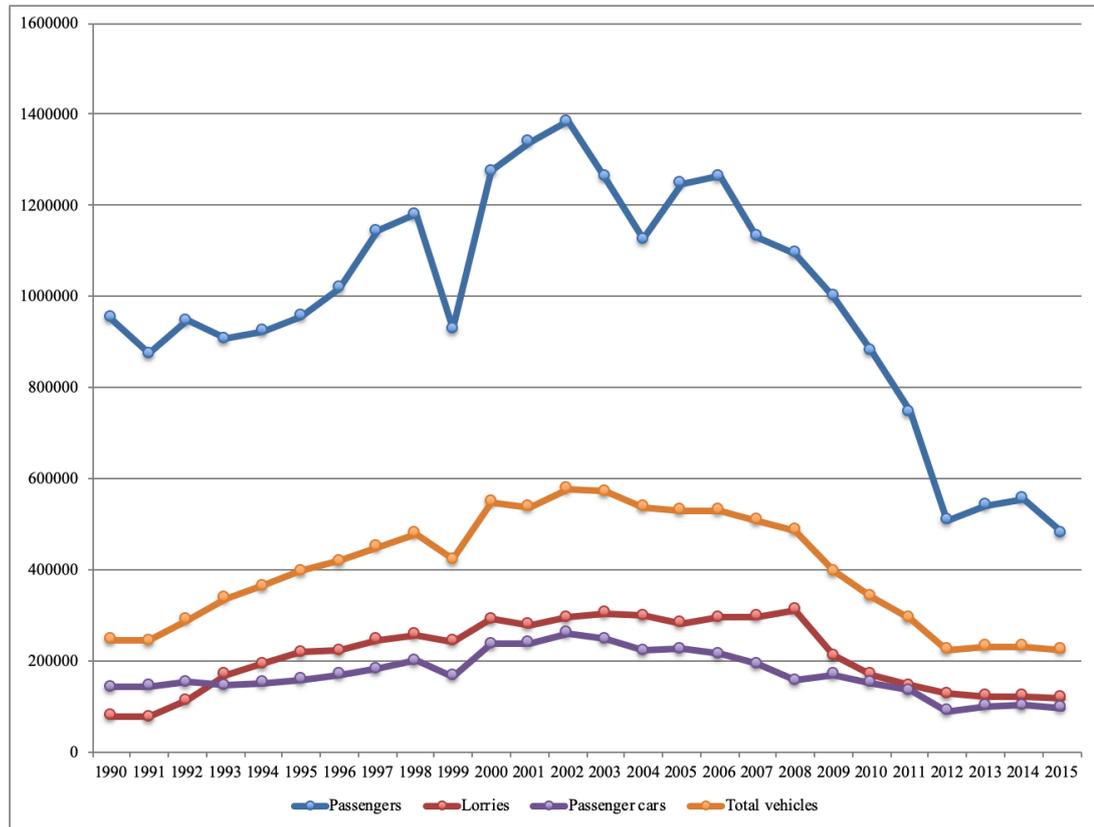
**Figure 8: Seaports of Category A.**  
Source: European Parliament and Council 1996.

The competitive advantage of the port of Patras should be analysed in relation neither to the ports of Piraeus and Thessaloniki, fundamental nodes in the global supply chains connecting China to Europe, nor to the port of Igoumenitsa, which has similar characteristics but different spatial extents<sup>31</sup>. Although sharing daily connections with

<sup>30</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Milionis, 12/02/2015.

<sup>31</sup> Semi-structured interviews with Mr Milionis, 12/02/2015, and OLPa Director of Development, 15/05/2015.

the Italian ports of Bari, Brindisi, Ancona, Venice, and Trieste, the ports of Patras and Igoumenitsa serve in fact different regions. Rather, its competitiveness should be measured vis-à-vis the logistical networks surrounding it: for this reason, it appears necessary to reconstruct the main mobilities across the port and examine them in relation to the geopolitical and infrastructural changes that have occurred over the past 30 years.



**Table 5: International passenger and truck traffic through the port of Patras, 1990-2015.**  
Source: Pappas 2012; OL.P.A. website ([http://www.patrasport.gr/cms/?page\\_id=517&lang=en](http://www.patrasport.gr/cms/?page_id=517&lang=en)).

Since the introduction of the first ferry line in 1960 the transit traffic through the port of Patras has increased slowly but steadily. At the beginning of the 1990s, two main factors determined an unscheduled growth in transit traffic (see Table 5), which the port and the whole city could have barely sustained. First, the political and geostrategic instabilities in the Balkan region rendered most of its connecting roads necessarily impassable, diverting the logistical networks between the Middle East and northern Europe through Greece<sup>32</sup>. As the EC highlighted in its communication on the development of short sea shipping in Europe,

“In 1990, 90% of Greece's exports to its EC partners went by the land route linking this country to the central areas of the Community. Since the beginning

<sup>32</sup> Semi-structured interviews with Mr Milonias, 12/02/2015, and Prof. Pappas, 03/02/2015.

of the military conflict in 1991 traffic switched to alternative routes: by road, further East, via Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary and even the Czech and Slovak Republics; by sea, via Italy, between Brindisi, Bari or Ancona and Patras or Igoumenitsa, whose ports are equipped to accommodate Ro/Ro traffic” (EC 1995a).

However – and this is the second reason – the port of Igoumenitsa was at that time only a small installation serving mainly Corfu and Brindisi, with limited maritime connections<sup>33</sup>. Although it could have been used as a transit seaport to improve the logistical connections and time efficiency of supply chains, the port of Igoumenitsa was actually incapable to bear such load of traffic, because of the scarce road connections towards Thessaloniki. Given the increased sea traffic to and from Italy, the EC recognised that there was “a particular need for Greece to develop stronger and more efficient maritime connections as an alternative to long and difficult overland routes” (EC 1995a).

### *Expansion*

Patras needed to be developed as the main transit hub for commercial routes connecting the Northern European countries (through Italy) to Greece (through Patras, and then Athens and Thessaloniki) and eventually to Turkey<sup>34</sup>. Due to the then high demand and positive market prospects for the truck traffic<sup>35</sup>, the idea of expanding the port looked “justified and feasible”, not only for the local experts and institutions but also for the EU that approved and financed the project<sup>36</sup>. The 1993 Plan on promoting economic recovery in Europe estimated the cost for the modernisation of the port of Patras in Greek Drachmas 23 billion<sup>37</sup> (EC 1993). The 1996 EC Annual Report on the TEN-T envisaged an eligible cost for the port of Patras of ECU44 million<sup>38</sup>, of which 26 million granted through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in the

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<sup>33</sup> See note 30.

<sup>34</sup> Semi-structured interview with Prof. Pappas, 03/02/2015.

<sup>35</sup> According to Milionis (semi-structured interviews, 12/02/2015 and 12/05/2015), the criteria to measure the port capacity in a RO/RO-PAX port is the truck traffic, as there are usually few variations throughout the year: indeed, trucks circulate all year round, and shipping companies, in order to secure a constant clientele, organise their schedules according to the truck traffic, not to the passenger traffic. In his words: “Estimates and traffic projections officially used for the feasibility justification of the new port talked about an annual turnout of the port between the range of 550,000 trucks per year, which were the most optimistic estimates, and 350,000 trucks per year, by the year 2030.... But that figure, 350,000, was already reached in 2009: so probably the most optimistic figure could be proven realistic, if we could have avoided the whole things of the last five or six years [i.e. the crisis]. ... All the justifications for the new port were accepted by the European Union, which gave money”.

<sup>36</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Milionis, 12/05/2015.

<sup>37</sup> According to the website <http://www.historicalstatistics.org/Currencyconverter.html>, this amount should be equivalent to about €112 million in 2015 absolute terms.

<sup>38</sup> ECU (European Currency Unit) is the precursor of the Euro, which replaced it in 1999 at parity 1:1.

programming period 1994-1999 (EC 1996a). According to Milionis, the EU, through the Structural Fund (SF), contributed to the expansion of the new port of Patras with 75% of its total amount, while the Greek government financed the remaining 25%. The cost of the port up to 2015 was €200 million, but another €100 million will be needed to complete the works<sup>39</sup>.

Competitiveness was one of the main criteria to choose where the port of Patras should have expanded. In 1992, the Athenian consultant company contacted by OLPa to develop the port contemplated four different options for its expansion: a) the southern periphery of the city; b) the northern area of the city, close to Valtos green corner; c) the area of Antirrio, the small town across the new bridge in mainland Greece; d) the area further south from the city, close to Kato Achaia<sup>40</sup> (see Figure 9). Although technical reasons were in fact considered<sup>41</sup>, accessibility, expandability, and interconnectivity drove the choice for the location of the new port, directing it towards the southern part of the city. According to Prof. Dimas, that area was indeed chosen because it was closer both to the old port and to the major routes, facilitating the connections with Athens and the rest of Peloponnese<sup>42</sup>. The presence and potential expansion of road and rail networks around the port area gave Patras a comparative advantage over its competitors, whose claims were rejected for technical, economic, and accessibility reasons.

In terms of traffic and logistics in and around Patras, technicians and planners both within and outside OLPa generally agree that the new port represents a remarkable improvement. For Prof. Dimas, while the old port had scarce connections with the surrounding road network, forcing thousands of lorries to cross the city centre every day, the new port “is connected through Glafkou directly to the bypass that leads to the highway to Athens: in this way, it avoids all the traffic from going through the city centre”<sup>43</sup>. According to OLPa Director of Development,

“the expansion of the port is a positive thing, almost ideal, because it prevents trucks from going through the city centre. Now, 85-90% of trucks come from the national road, from outside the town and go directly to the port through the new

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<sup>39</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Milionis, 19/02/2015.

<sup>40</sup> Semi-structured interviews with Mr Milionis, 23/03/2015 and Prof. Dimas, 13/03/2015.

<sup>41</sup> In particular, the technical reasons concerned the depth of seawaters in the other locations, which would have made difficult to build breakwaters. Indeed, immediately off the coasts of the other areas, the seawater reaches the depth of more than 50 metres, while the area that was actually selected has an eleven-metre depth, thus facilitating the construction of breakwaters (semi-structured interview with Mr Milionis, 23/03/2015).

<sup>42</sup> Semi-structured interview with Prof. Dimas, 13/03/2015.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

junctions; while once they have to go through the city to reach the port. Therefore, the new port represents a great improvement for the traffic and the logistical network”<sup>44</sup>.



**Figure 9: Location of the old port of Patras, with the four alternatives contemplated for its expansion. Source: Elaboration from Google Earth.**

Whereas the port of Patras gained competitive advantage over initial local contenders, improving the circulation surrounding it, in the long run it lost its leading position within the port system. When the number of lorries reached a first peak in 2003, exceeding the 300,000 units, the port of Patras was a notable joining link between the whole Middle East and Eastern Europe eastwards, and Italy and the rest of Europe westwards. During the new port construction, from 1996 to July 2011 when it opened, a series of geopolitical, economic, and logistical events have seriously undermined Patras’ role in the lower Adriatic corridor.

The end of the Yugoslav Wars opened new traffic routes along the Balkans, allowing direct road connections from the Middle East to central Europe. Since the parallel expansion of the port of Igoumenitsa, and the 2006 inauguration of the Egnatia Road in the northern part of the country, connecting Igoumenitsa with Thessaloniki and eventually Turkey, the port of Igoumenitsa has incremented its traditionally-local traffic base, absorbing the transit traffic from North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Turkey, once directed towards Patras (Psaraftis 2007).

The decline in transit traffic has downsized the initial project for the port expansion, which envisaged the construction of nine berths and one commercial dock,

<sup>44</sup> Semi-structured interview, 11/02/2015.

stretching from the southern industrial area in Glafkou Road to the old lighthouse (see Figure 10 and Figure 11). Later projects abandoned the construction of four further berths in the area between the two ports, prompting the realisation of only five berths, one of which (the commercial one) is still under construction. According to Milionis, the whole area between the two ports (called “Face B” of the new port) will probably never be completed<sup>45</sup>.

Furthermore, whereas the port of Piraeus has strengthened its spatial advantage within the international supply chain, the port of Patras has not been able to develop as a joining link in this process, losing access to a potential vast market (see Arvis et al. 2007; Cowen 2014). The two ports are connected in terms of local and regional traffic, with freight coming from the islands, unloaded in Piraeus, “put on tractors to Patras and then shipped to Europe, [but] the two organisations do not have any formal cooperation agreement”<sup>46</sup>. However, these connections do not concern international traffic from China and the Far East, and for the time being there is no concrete demand from the market to develop the port of Patras as a link in the global supply chain<sup>47</sup>.

More than the economic crisis, it is the logistical development in Greece and Europe that made Patras lose its competitive advantage over the other ports. As Table 5 has shown, the decline of traffic through the port of Patras started in 2003 and continued even more pronouncedly in 2008, well before the burst of the economic crisis that hit Greece two years later. Since then, the transit traffic has plunged: in 2015, the number of lorries was just a bit higher than in 1992. The overall outcome of the expansion of the port, in terms of competitiveness, logistics, and economic efficiency, made Prof. Dimas confess in retrospect that, “the new port is better, but I don’t know if it was worth the investment”<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> See note 39.

<sup>46</sup> See note 36.

<sup>47</sup> Semi-structured interviews with Mr Milionis, 12/05/2015, and OLPa Director of Development, 15/05/2015.

<sup>48</sup> See note 42.



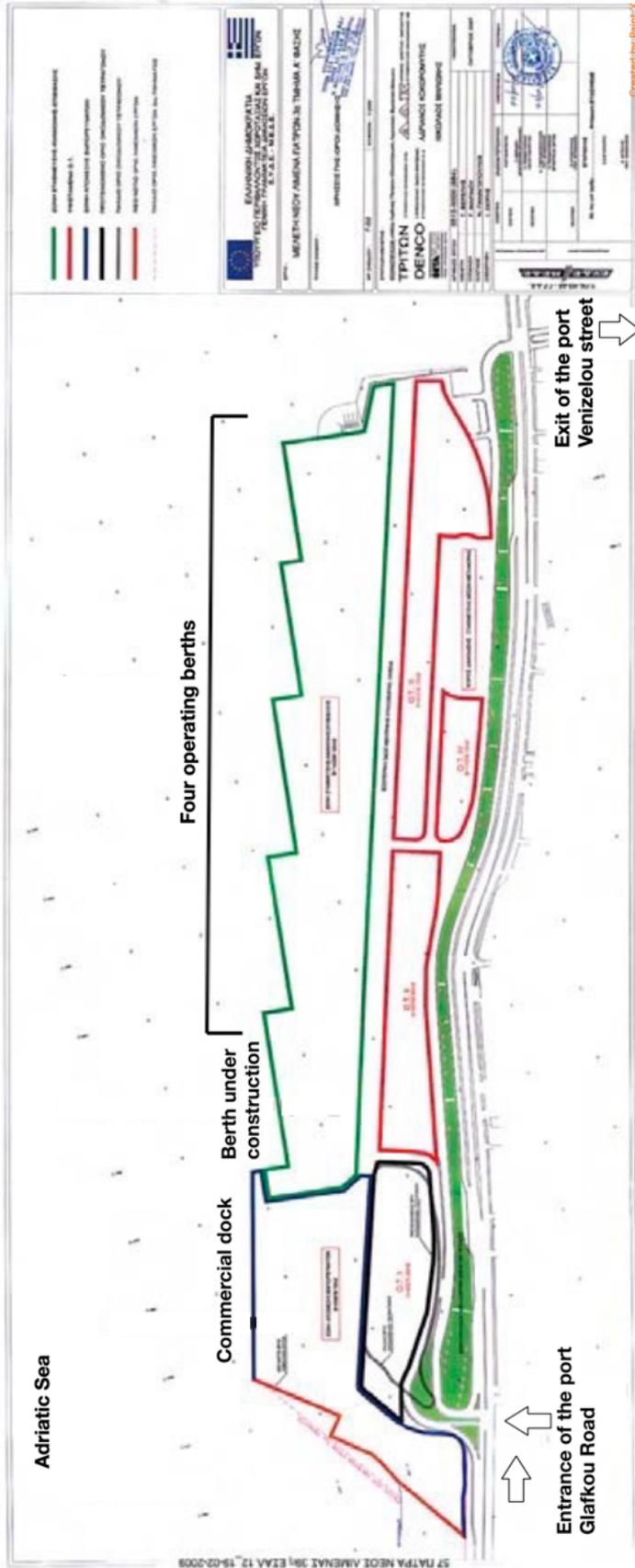


Figure 11: The composition of the current port of Patras.  
Source: Law 4081/2012, approved masterplan of Patras, 2009 (explanations added).

### *Privatisation*

Along with competitiveness, privatisation is another concept that has entered the language and practice of logistics and supply chains (Cullinane and Song 2002; Robinson 2002; Mangan, Lalwani, and Fynes 2008; Ng et al. 2014). Increasing private participation in port operations and administration is generally deemed to improve port efficiency, performance, and competitiveness, although some authors have actually diminished its importance (Cullinane and Song 2002; Tongzon and Heng 2005). More notably, privatisation of port operations and administration may raise issues on the (lack or loss of) sovereign control that nation-states usually place upon such economic assets, laying bare the geo-economic interests behind transnational logistics corporations (Cullinane and Song 2002; Mangan, Lalwani, and Fynes 2008).

In the context of the worldwide neoliberal restructuring of logistics and trade, over the past twenty years Greece has launched a series of administrative reforms in order to supposedly project the country within the wider European transport network. These reforms have profoundly affected port governance in Greece: the participation of Greece in the EU and in its monetary policies compelled the country to, on the one hand, contribute to the European-led construction of a multi-modal transport network connecting the various member states and, on the other hand, limit its economic involvement in, and possibly privatise, state-led companies and institutions, in order to reduce its already high public deficit (Pallis 2007a, 2007b).

The Greek legislation on port management was substantially reformed after decades in the late 1990s. Despite being the first European country by coastline length, “national administrations have placed little importance on infrastructure for the development of maritime transport ...due to the small position that the country holds in the global marketplace” (Pallis 2007a:156; see also Psaraftis 2007). In fact, the Ministry of Mercantile Marine (MMM), the state authority that could decide the strategies and policies related to the ports, has traditionally focused on “flag-state” policies, aimed at supporting the Greek owned fleet, rather than on “port-state” policies, providing port services (Pallis 2007a; Pallis and Syriopoulos 2007).

Ports were therefore considered as public law undertakings, “organised as comprehensive state-controlled port organisations, with the state acting both as regulator and port service provider” (Pallis 2007a:156). Being ruled as public entities, port authorities could neither take on managerial or investment risks, nor sign

agreement with concessionaires<sup>49</sup>. The private sector was involved as a residual actor “solely when port authorities lack the capacity or the equipment” (*ibid.*).

In the context of a neoliberal restructuring of international trade, the major reform was ratified in 1999 and concerned the main ports of Piraeus and Thessaloniki, which became corporations and were listed in the Athens Stock Exchange. Considered necessary to connect Greece to the global and European supply chains, the reform aimed at overcoming the structural deficiencies of Greek ports, namely “the absence of long-term vision, the insensitivity towards users’ demands, absence of port facilities and inland connections and lack of investment” (*ibid.*).

The port of Piraeus, in particular, has swiftly developed as an international logistical hub over the last years, ranked 39<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> most important container port in the world and in the Mediterranean Sea, respectively, with almost 700% increase in TEUs<sup>50</sup> over the period 2010-2014 (IAPH 2015). Such incredible surge in commercial activity is explained by the geographical advantage of the port of Piraeus, fundamental hub within the Belt and Road Initiative that catalyses the container traffic from China and the Far East. Instead of spending more time circumnavigating Europe to reach the ports of Rotterdam or Hamburg, cargo ships disembark in Piraeus, where:

“freight is reloaded into small feeder ships and driven to other ports of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea area. Also, the latest development is that COSCO, the operator at the container terminal of the port of Piraeus, operates block trains from Piraeus to central Europe, in which all the wagons are occupied by COSCO. ...COSCO intends to expand these operations.... What they want to do is to develop the port of Piraeus as their main European terminal, and from there to distribute all over Europe”<sup>51</sup>.

Whereas privatisation processes have usually concerned container ports, even RO/RO-PAX ports have been reformed, in order to increase their efficiency and competitiveness at regional level (Psaraftis 2007). In 2001, another law changed the status of ten other ports of national importance, namely those of Patras, Igoumenitsa and Kerkira (western Greece), Kavala and Alexandroupoulos (north-eastern Greece), Volos (central Greece), Elefsina, Rafina, and Lavrio (Attica), and Iraklion (Crete). Through such reform, these ports turned from public law undertakings to private S.A. (Société Anonime) companies, with a single government owned share (Pallis 2007a).

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<sup>49</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Milionis, 22/06/2015.

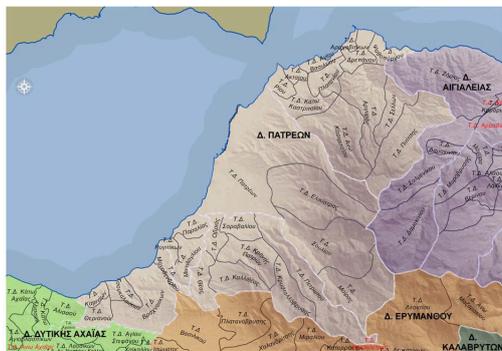
<sup>50</sup> TEU (Twenty-Foot Equivalent Unit) is the unit of the capacity of a container (see: <http://www.logisticsglossary.com/term/teu/>)

<sup>51</sup> See note 36.

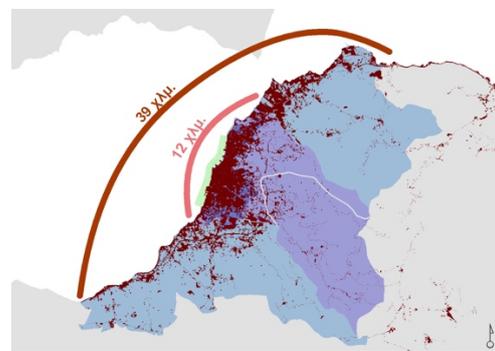
Despite remaining government owned entities, port authorities have been entrusted with the “managerial manoeuvring... of a private S.A. Company”<sup>52</sup>, which can take its own decisions and risks, based on its own revenues. With particular regard to the port of Patras, this:

“is owned by the State. Since 12 December 2002 the State has conceded the management, operation and maintenance of the port zone and infrastructure to the Patras Port Authority S.A. ('OLPa') until 2042 by means of a contract. OLPa pays an annual fee to the State, established at 2% of the annual turnover of the company. OLPa is responsible for the provision of all the port-related services and collects all the relevant charges from every vessel or passenger. The only shareholder of OLPa is the Greek State, through the State-owned Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund S.A.” (EC 2014a).

The implementation of the administrative reforms has contributed to the emergence of spatial and political issues, expanding the urban area of Patras along 39 km of seaside (see Figure 12) and attributing different land uses to the coastal and urban zones. Seven out of those 39 km of seaside, stretching in front of the city centre of Patras, are indeed classified as port zone (the light green area in Figure 13), granting OLPa exclusive rights for its utilisation. Since only OLPa has legal jurisdiction over that area, the GUP can only make recommendations or suggestions for its spatial improvement, *de facto* preventing the municipality from using it.



**Figure 12: Current extension of Patras municipality (light brown area). It now incorporates the municipalities of Messatida, Paralia, Rio, and Vrachneika. Source: Pappas, Dimas, and Tsekouras 2010a.**



**Figure 13: Progressive extension of Patras urban area.**  
 - Until 1997: Area enclosed within white boundary;  
 - After 1997 Kapodistrias reform: Violet area;  
 - After 2011 Kallikratis reform: Blue area.  
 Source: Pappas 2012.

#### 4.4 Overcoming old spatial barriers: the railway network

For the port system to be efficient and effectively link production and consumption sites, the railway and road networks should be likewise conducive to seamlessly

<sup>52</sup> See note 49.

interconnect land and sea “fixes”. As previously mentioned, their development is part of a comprehensive European project aiming to create a homogeneous Europe-wide marketplace where capital, goods, and people can circulate in a relatively unbounded manner. However, the creation and expansion of such networks have often been subject to peculiar historical and geographical obstacles that hindered the fulfilment of the original projects, generating uneven and discontinuous patterns. Like the port system, the railway and road networks in and around Patras have faced historical and geopolitical problems that caused, it is argued here, diversified configurations of development. The burst of the economic crisis and the decline in traffic have eventually constituted the fatal blow for the completion of the TEN-T.

Reconstructing the historical development of the railway network in Greece is fundamental to understand current issues. As Marx grasped, capital saw in the development of transport and communication networks a necessary condition for its own expansion and circulation “beyond every spatial barrier” (Marx 1973[1857]:459). The initial development of a railway network in Greece responded precisely to such needs. According to Prof. Pappas<sup>53</sup>, the first railway lines ever constructed were indeed the Piraeus-Athens (1869), to connect the city with its port, and the Pyrgos-Katakolo (1881) in western Peloponnese, in order to facilitate the export of raisins produced in the surroundings of Pyrgos. The railway network was inaugurated in Patras in 1887, contributing first to the export of raisins produced in the north-eastern and south-western regions, and later to the urban and industrial development of the city itself (Milionis 2013).

However, capitalist development in Peloponnese has proceeded along an uneven path: the capitalist tendency towards homogenisation has gone hand in hand with the contradictory, yet unavoidable, tendency towards differentiation, resulting in “the production of space according to a very particular pattern” (N. Smith 2008:122). In the Greek case, differentiation has taken the shape of lack of standardisation, another key process in logistics (Cowen 2014) and, more broadly, in capitalism (Easterling 2014). The discussions related to the construction of a railway network in the region saw in fact the opposition between two contrasting political-economic views on development, which shaped the Greek spatial pattern for decades.

The dispute involved the major political factions at that time: one side envisaged the Greek railway network as an extension of the existing international network, thus

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<sup>53</sup> Semi-structured interview, 17/03/2015.

addressing the lack of communication links not only within the country, but also between Greece and the external markets of northern Europe and Asia. The other side favoured instead a regional network, capable to connect local markets between each other and with other main transport links in order to foster national development (Milionis 2013). With the rise to power of Charilaos Trikoupis as Prime Minister in 1882, the second perspective prevailed: the network “based on flexible track and operational characteristics, adaptable to terrain conditions and to market requirements ...was developed segment by segment, (by different concessioners and as separate operational entities)” (*ibid.*).

The decision to create small local railway connections to serve the economic needs of the various regions eventually resulted in the utilisation of two different metric gauges. The international standard track gauge (1,435 mm) was indeed used in the region of Athens and in Attica, while a smaller gauge (1 metre) was employed in the Peloponnese region for economic advantages<sup>54</sup> (*ibid.*). Even when the railway network expanded in the following decades, the two regions maintained two different standards. Moreover, given the physical conformation of the region, the railway network was constructed along the coastline, with other shorter lines running to the hilly and mountainous inland areas. For this reason, “The network is today disconnected, with the exception of a few parts operating only for touristic purposes (for example between Diakofto and Kalavryta)” (Pappas, Kalamiotis, and Karydi 2013).

Whereas railway lines in mainland Greece could later be easily connected to the Balkan network, the costal line Athens-Corinth-Patras-Pyrgos remained isolated from the rest of Greece. In fact, the current Athens Railway Station is the result of the merger of two adjacent yet different railway terminals: Larissa station, operating with a standard gauge serving central and northern Greece up to Larissa; and the Peloponnese station, running on a narrow gauge serving instead the Peloponnese area. Until few years ago, passengers coming from southern Greece had to get off at the Peloponnese station and walk to the nearby Larissa station to go northward, and vice versa<sup>55</sup>.

As Harvey notes, the creation of a spatially fixed transport network represents an inner contradiction for capital, which instead needs to constantly overcome spatial

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

barriers. As soon as capital accelerates its turnover, it will need to overcome the spatial barriers it had itself created. In other words, with the increasing progress and growth of accumulation, the transport network itself will become a barrier to overcome (Harvey 2001). After a period of long decline following WWII, discussions and projects to redevelop the Greek railway network resumed in the 1990s. The context, this time, was different: this process corresponded to a renovated “periodic restructuring of the geography of social infrastructures” (Harvey 1999:403) in the framework of redeveloping the whole European transport network. The development of the Greek railway network shifted to a European scale, responding to the need of overcoming spatial barriers to the development of European capital.

The issue was not simply to connect the Greek network to the European one, but also to modernise and standardise it, creating a homogeneous transport system at European level. The Greek railway system suffered indeed from the co-existence of two incompatible gauges and from the lack of electrification, especially along its peripheral lines. The overcoming of such spatial barriers, created by capital itself in the late-XIX-century phase of accumulation, now seems to require a rescaling of political and financial responsibilities at European level, in order to create a homogeneous and borderless European space for the development of the internal market.

In this regard, Patras was included in the core TEN-T project n. 29 as an important railway node along the south-eastern Ionian/Adriatic intermodal corridor. According to the description of the project:

“The Ionian/Adriatic intermodal corridor completes the Hellenic railway network and improves connectivity of the western part of Greece, which currently is served by only road transport. The completion of the Hellenic railway network to the west is expected to have a major impact on the increase of the market segment of the railways for domestic, international and transit transport of Greece. The project has been planned to create an efficient intermodal transport ‘Gate’ in South-East Europe, which will facilitate the accessibility of the Central and North European markets from East and far East countries. The project includes the construction of an intermodal terminal at the port of Igoumenitsa and a Ra-Ra connection for passing the Rio-Antirio sea stretch of 1.7 km” (NEA Transport research and training 2004).

The project envisaged the creation of two interlinked railway routes: an east-to-west line connecting Kozani in Central Greece to Igoumenitsa, and a north-to-south line from Ioannina in north-western Greece to Kalamata in southern Peloponnese, crossing

the Rio-Antirrio channel and the city of Patras. As the INEA<sup>56</sup> report states (2012), these railway routes “aim to connect the major ports in Greece with each other, and with the main rail routes to the rest of Europe”. The parallel TEN-T core project n. 22 aimed at upgrading (and partly constructing) a mixed railway connection for both passenger and freight between Athens and Dresden, via Thessaloniki, Sofia, Budapest, Vienna and Prague, linking the Black-Sea ports and the ports of the two major Greek cities to Central Europe (NEA Transport research and training 2004).

With regard to the railway line Athens-Patras, the project initially did not figure among the priorities of the TEN-T, although it was considered a line of national interest (ECORYS Nederland BV 2006) that should have been presumptively upgraded to combined transport within 2001 (EC 1996b). According to the Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance (2005), “funds from the Cohesion Fund [CF], the Regional Operational Programmes and the European Investment Bank [EIB]” have been used in the period 2000-2006 for the strategical development of the Greek railway network, in particular “to complete the national railway line Patra-Athens-Eidomeni-Promaxonas, and link it to the country's main ports (Patra, Piraeus, Thessaloniki) and the European railway network”. Among the new projects approved by the EC and financed through the 2000 CF is the “construction of the new Corinth-Kiato railway line and studies for the Corinth-Patras section”, for a total cost of almost €40 million (EC 2001).

Within the new framework of the Core Network Corridors, Patras is considered one of the core hubs of the Orient/East-Med (OEM) Corridor, for combining multimodal transport facilities. Regulation no. 1316/2013 identifies two main projects to be carried out: the port area, with the creation of “Port interconnections, [and the] (further) development of multimodal platforms”, and the Patras-Athens railway, with “Studies and works, [and] port interconnections”.

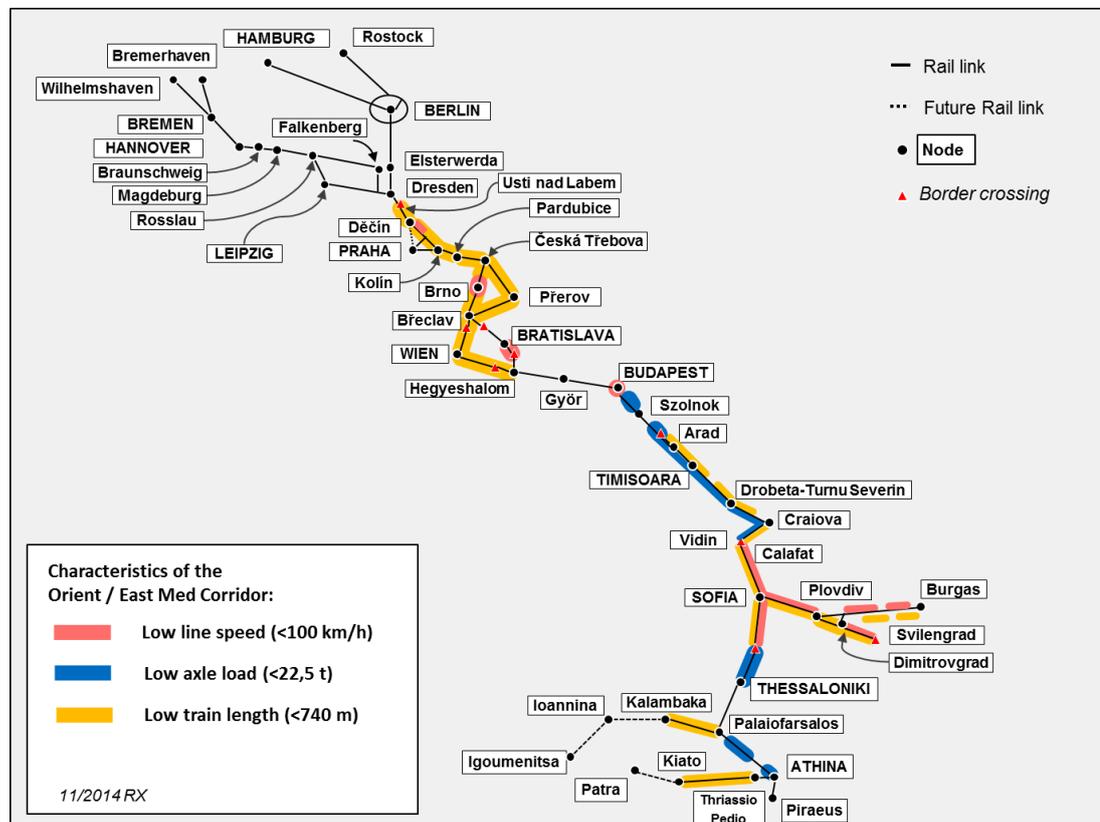
The projects should guarantee the seamless supply-chain circulation over a uniform space that stretches like a dotted, yet unique, sequence from south-eastern to northern Europe, encountering no resistance whatsoever from borders and erased nation-states (see Figure 14). According to the European Coordinator responsible for the OEM Corridor, however,

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<sup>56</sup> The Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA) is the agency of the European Commission created in 2014 to supplant the TEN-T Executive Agency (TEN-T EA).

“A key requirement of the Regulation No. 1315/2013 is a maritime port connection with the road and rail network. The Ports of Igoumenitsa and Patras in Greece are currently lacking connection to the country’s railway network. The latter constitutes a substantial interoperability bottleneck, *hindering the seamless intermodal transportation with the use of road/rail and maritime modes along the supply chain of the OEM corridor*. These missing rail connections have been taken into consideration by the country, but only the one in Patras is being addressed by a project study” (Grosch 2014, emphasis added).

As of 2015, modernisation works had interested the section Athens-Kiato, a small village 100 km from Patras, but the remaining distance to Patras could only be covered by car or coach. According to the report of the European Coordinator, the old Patras-Kiato railway section does not comply with the minimum axle load threshold of 22.50 tonnes, cannot sustain freight trains longer than 740 metres, and lacks electrification and a proper signalling and security system (Grosch 2014, see also Figure 14).



**Figure 14: OEM Corridor Railway Network: Areas with unfavourable alignment.**  
**Source: EC 2014c: Orient/East-Med Core Network Corridor Study - Final Report.**

Works along the Patras-Kiato railway line have already started in order to upgrade the current track to a modern, electrified, and high-speed line running on a standard gauge. According to the 2014 OEM Corridor studies, however, the construction of a new 71-km double-track railway line from Kiato to Rododafni is expected to terminate in 2017. The project, costing €920 million, has been co-funded by the CF, and two

National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 (EC 2014b). The 27.6-km section from Rododafni to Rio (in northern Patras), amounting to €502 million financed by the NSRF 2007-2013, was at its early stages of construction in 2015<sup>57</sup>, and is expected to be completed in 2017. The crucial point remains, where and how the railway line is supposed to cross Patras and reach the new port.

### *The violence of speed*

In his analysis of speed, mobility and war tactics through history, the French philosopher Paul Virilio (2006) denounces the intrinsic violent character of logistical networks. Whether conceived for the mobility of workers, tourists or goods, roads and railways tacitly embody the masculine intention to penetrate and appropriate the territory they traverse. By straightening routes and conquering times, the widespread dissemination of road and railway lines combined with the increasing speed of vehicles colonise lands and domesticate passengers, shaping the geographies of power and mobility.

At the crossroad of multiple infrastructural networks, the port of Patras bears witness to the violent character of speed perpetrated on the ground by several actors at different levels. Being a core rail/road terminal within the OEM Corridor, the port of Patras would need to be connected to the railway and road infrastructures of Western Greece and, more generally, south-eastern Europe, in order to conjoin the European space through a common seamless network. However, the railway section from Rio to Patras, including a potential connection with the port, is still in its planning phase: its construction, to be financed by CF for an estimated amount of €168 million, is supposed to start in 2017 and terminate in 2022 (EC 2014b). Such project remains a thorny question, intertwining with historical, logistical, and political issues at various scales, which epitomise the inherent violence of capitalist development and logistical networks (Cowen 2014).

The project constitutes indeed a fierce clash between diverging European, national, and local spatial needs, in some cases difficult to reconcile. Given the position of the new port in the southern periphery of the city, one of the projects contemplated the modernisation and standardisation of the existing railway line

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<sup>57</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Milionis, 23/03/2015.

cutting across Patras<sup>58</sup>, which runs on a non-electrified, single-track narrow-gauge line, with multiple grade-level crossings. Part of that line, the 24-km section connecting the city centre with the university campus and the hospital, has been nonetheless used since 2010 for local commuting<sup>59</sup>. Upgrading the line to permit the passage of freight trains across the city centre, usually four or five times longer than commercial trains, would represent a serious blow for a quite successful local service, adding up potential problems for viability, security, and access to the seaside.

The railway line through the city of Patras has been also the bone of contention among different institutional actors, each with its conflicting spatial prerogatives and roles. The 1985 municipal Master Plan envisaged a railway bypass of the city and the relocation of the terminals outside the city centre (Milionis 2013). The idea was rejected for its supposed inefficiency, as well as for its high financial and environmental costs, as it would have involved the construction of 9.1 km of new lines in the open ground, 1.7 km of bridges and 6.7 km of tunnels (Milionis 2016).

As Virilio continues (2006:74, his emphasis), “The levelling off programmed by the railway was not enough, it was necessary to penetrate under the ground, *as if speed demanded not only the absence of obstacles but also the absence of matter*”. In 1993, the Hellenic Railways Organisation (OSE) proposed the construction of a 4.3-km underground section that should have connected the northern part of the city with the station of Agios Andreas, proceeding to the new port on a surface alignment of about 2 km (Karampogias 2013). The project, involving the construction of a modern, electrified, and standard-gauge line for both passengers and freight, should have cost around €700 million (Pappas, Moraitis, and Scholl 2013). The OSE project became the official proposal for the development of the city, determining the urban planning guidelines and being included in the official city Master Plan (Milionis 2013, see also Figure 15).

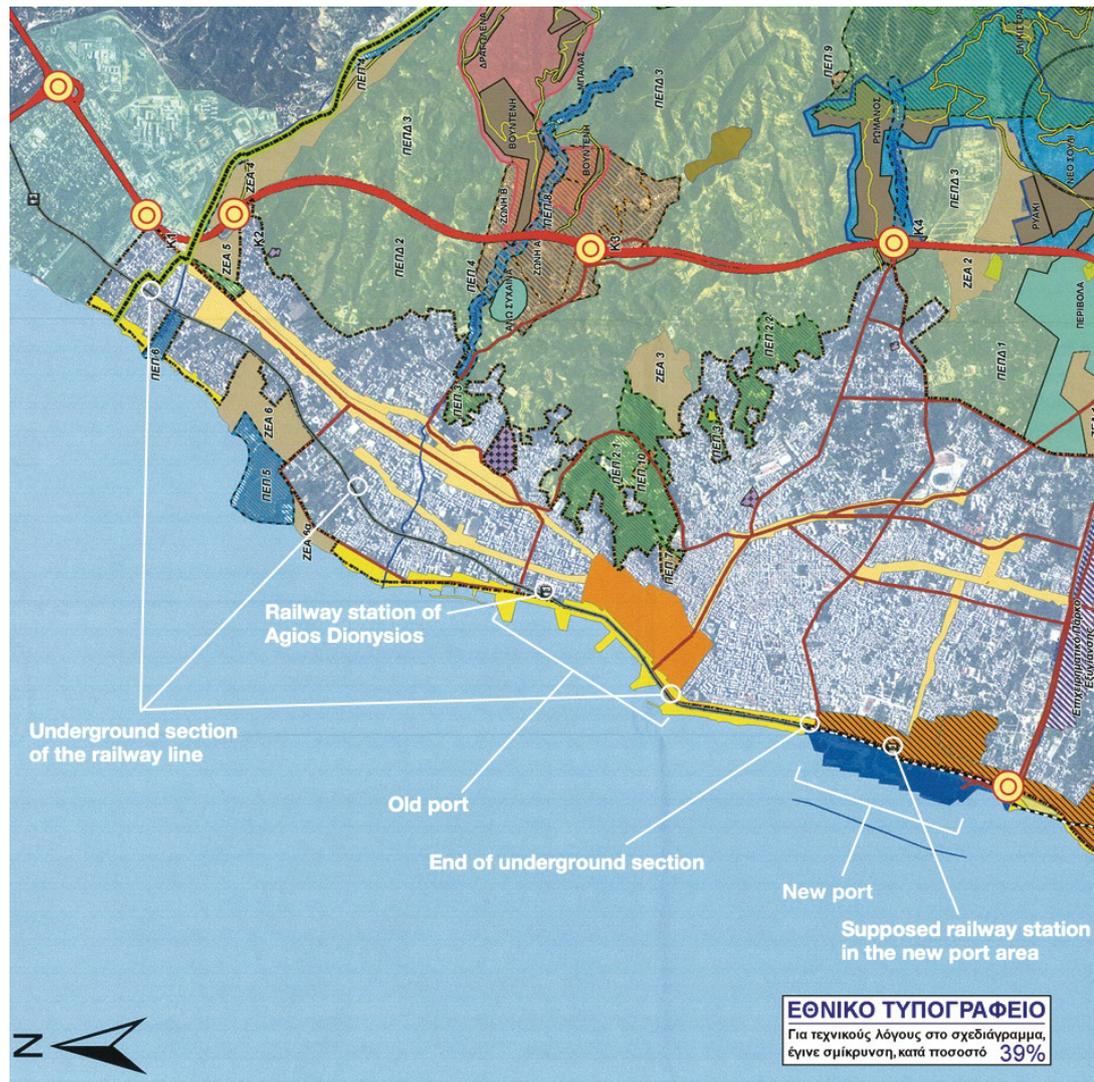
However, the already-advanced decline of port traffic and the pessimistic expectations for the near and medium terms, forecasting about 12 passenger trains and 2 freight trains per day until 2040 (Belulaj et al. 2013; Tsafoulios et al. 2013), made

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<sup>58</sup> The railway line in question is part of the old railway network of the Peloponnese, running from the north periphery of the city, crossing the city centre and the new port, and joining the southern line heading to Pyrgos and Kalamata.

<sup>59</sup> The suburban train “Proastiakos” started its operation in 2010, connecting hourly the station of Agios Vassilios (in the north periphery of the city) to that of Agios Andreas (halfway mark between the two ports). Despite the absence of any market research prior to its launch, it has proven to be successful, serving about 100,000 people per month (Milionis 2013).

the project unattractive for European funds. In fact, the EIB, “which is involved in the financing of the project, has declared the last section to be ‘non-bankable’ because of the high costs, and has suspended financing” (Pappas, Moraitis, and Scholl 2013). In the 2014 OEM study and relative annexes, the project of the rail connection to the port of Patras, still in its planning phase and with critical issues, is not contemplated for the allocation of funding (EC 2014b, 2014c). Unless new solutions are found, it is highly unlikely for such project to receive further funds from European institutions.



**Figure 15: Official project of the underground railway line.**  
 Source: Master Plan of Patras (A.A.P. - Issue on Compulsory Expropriations and City-Planning – no. 358/2011), explanations added.

### *The violence of the economic crisis*

The burst of the crisis imposed further violence on the Greek territory, not only destroying the socio-economic fabric and the everyday life of citizens, but also dramatically reconfiguring the spatial development of the country and its transport network. In some cases, the crisis accelerated the process of devaluation,

dispossession, and privatisation of public assets (among which is the port of Piraeus) as part of the policies of austerity that Greece had to implement in order to receive financial bailouts from the Troika<sup>60</sup> (Lapavitsas 2012; Hadjimichalis 2014; Flassbeck and Lapavitsas 2015). In others, the crisis led to the necessary contraction of public expenditures and the consequent abandonment and delay of public works, as in the case of the railway network.

The western corridor from Ioannina to Antirrio (project 29, subsection 2007-EL-29010-S, Figure 16), for which €43 million were expected to be invested (half of which provided by the EU), has been cancelled (INEA 2012). According to the EC Report on the implementation of Priority Projects in 2012, the railway line should have been constructed from scratch, connecting with the Igoumenitsa-Kalambaka section planned within the same priority project. Nonetheless, “There is no specific timetable for this part of line, due to the significant shortages in national expenditures for public works, resulting from the economic crises (*sic*)” (EC 2012).



Figure 16: Projects for the railway line Antirrio-Ioannina.

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/ten-t/ten-t-projects/projects-by-country/greece/2007-el-29010-s>

<sup>60</sup> The tripartite decision group formed by the EC, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

South of Patras, the project for the upgrading of the railway line Patras-Pyrgos-Kalamata (project 29, subsection 2007-EL-29030-S, Figure 17) has been initially “significantly delayed because of administrative and internal organisational issues” (INEA 2010), without altering the expected budget of €31 million (again, half of which is provided by the EU). Subsequently the project was postponed “due to the adverse financial conditions prevailing in the Greek economy” (EC 2012). The same report highlighted the fact that only the Priority Project 29 had not started by that time, and remarked upon the complicated question of finding economic resources to support it. SFs and CFs were supposed to finance the project, but the “Accessibility” Operational Programme produced within the NSRF for Greece (2007-2013) does not foresee financial support for this TEN-T project. Therefore, “financing of this project is considered difficult” (*ibid.*).



**Figure 17: Projects for the railway line Rio-Kalamata via Patras.**

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/ten-t/ten-t-projects/projects-by-country/greece/2007-el-29030-s>

Within the new framework of the Core Network Corridors, the whole railway project from Ioannina to Patras and Kalamata does not appear, privileging instead the east-to-west axes Igoumenitsa-Trikala-Karditsa and Patras-Athens (Figure 18). As of 31 December 2014, works were only in their initial phases. According to INEA, in the Patras-Pyrgos-Olympia section, “Phase A of the studies has been completed. The two contracts for the implementation of Phase B have been awarded. Environmental

studies and geotechnical investigations have started and all studies are ongoing”; while for the further south Alfios-Kiparissia-Kalamata section, “The contract for the implementation of Phase A of the studies has been awarded and the studies are ongoing” (INEA 2015). According to Mr Milionis, “the connection between Patras and Pyrgos is under discussion for being upgraded, but it is really difficult that works will ever start before 2020. The upgrade works for the railway line between Pyrgos and Kalamata are still on paper; while the Kalamata-Corinth line is left for the future”<sup>61</sup>.



Figure 18: Studies on the OEM Core Network Corridor.  
Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t-guidelines/corridors/corridor-studies\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t-guidelines/corridors/corridor-studies_en.htm)

#### 4.5 The road network: the PPP as a one-size-fits-all model

The Greek road network, strategic for the expansion of the European single market and its connection with the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, followed the neoliberal path of liberalisation and privatisation. European, national, and private

<sup>61</sup> See note 57.

interests have constantly intermingled, generating blurring boundaries between different, at times contrasting, responsibilities and priorities. Since the burst of the economic crisis, with the Greek state unable to expand its already high public deficit, public works have been deprioritised and delayed, whereas private participation, already widespread in Greece and southern Europe (Albaladejo 2014), has increased. Whereas private capitals were warmly welcomed for the implementation of public works, the interests of private landowners, most of which from low-income background, whose land needed to be expropriated and included in the planning regulations, have been systematically ignored, in favour of a vaguely defined public interest (Potsiou and Basiouka 2012; Hadjimichalis 2014).

Since the 1990s, governments of every political leaning have resorted to public-private partnerships (PPPs) in order to abide by the increasingly stringent budgetary ties imposed by the EU and, at the same time, implement the infrastructural projects necessary to project the country towards the global market (Kitsos 2014). The PPP, a risk-sharing partnership between public authorities and private companies, has been growingly utilised in Europe for the co-financing of works of public interest, especially in the transport sector (Vanelander et al. 2014; Domingues and Zlatkovic 2015). Even Greece started to adopt this tool, financing the construction of infrastructural works.

#### *The first round of PPP: the Rio-Antirrio Bridge*

Among the works financed through the first round of PPPs in the 1990s is the Rio-Antirrio Bridge<sup>62</sup>, an astounding infrastructural project that connects Peloponnese, from Patras' northern neighbourhood of Rio, with mainland Greece in Antirrio, removing the discontinuities along the transport network (Lianos and Chorafa 2013). It meets at the intersection between the Ionian Odos, running from Ioannina to southern Peloponnese, and the PATHE motorway, few kilometres north of Patras. Stretching for 2252 metres, it is "the longest multi-span cable-stayed bridge in the world" (OMEGA Centre - UCL 2010).

The idea of the bridge goes back to the end of the XIX century, when the then Prime Minister Trikoupis (to whom the bridge is now dedicated) proposed a railway connection between the two shores. However, the technical and economic difficulties of realising such big-scale project at that time led to its abandonment. After being

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<sup>62</sup> The others are the Athens International Airport and the Athens bypass, called Attiki Odos.

hidden for decades, the idea re-emerged in 1980, when the Greek government announced a tender to construct the bridge, which nonetheless did not attract interest among construction companies. After another failed attempt in 1987, in 1991 a third tender was proclaimed: the contractor would have benefited from the 42-year concession of the bridge, including its toll revenues, and from external funds. The Concession Agreement was signed in 1996 between the Greek State and the Greek-French joint venture Gefyra, led by the French company VINCI Concessions S.A.S. (OMEGA Centre - UCL 2010; Papanikolaos et al. 2014).

The PPP, one of the first ever employed in Greece for this kind of projects, was Hobson's choice for the Greek government, given its high budget deficit and the tightening spending policies imposed by the EU to enter the monetary union. The EU and the EIB guaranteed the financing, allowing the final sign of the agreement with the concessionaire: the former through the 1994-1999 and 2000-2006 SFs, the latter through a three-tranche loan of €370 million<sup>63</sup> (Gefyra.gr n.d.; OMEGA Centre - UCL 2010). Besides, the insertion of the bridge within the initial priority projects of the TEN-T network as part of the PATHE motorway axis prompted the EIB, otherwise "extremely reluctant to provide long-term financing for the construction of the bridge", to subsidise its construction<sup>64</sup> (OMEGA Centre - UCL 2010). The project was put on paper in 1998, while the construction took place between 2000 and 2004. The bridge was inaugurated in August 2004, just before the beginning of the Olympics Games, four months ahead of the scheduled deadline (OMEGA Centre - UCL 2010; Gefyra.gr n.d.).

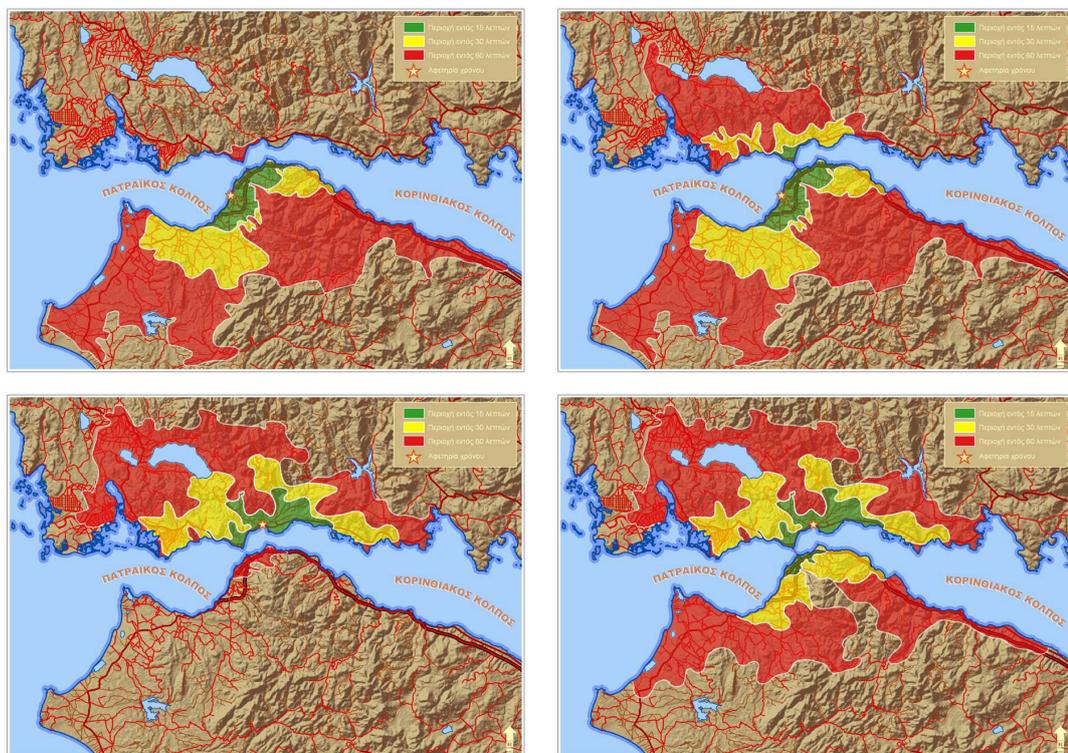
The realisation of the bridge annihilated spatio-temporal barriers between Peloponnese and mainland Greece, reshaping the geography of mobilities across the region. It shrank crossing times to five minutes, compared to the 45 minutes previously needed to cover the distance by ferryboat (without considering waiting times and weather conditions, see Lianos and Chorafa 2013), and re-approached the two sides of the shore, removing physical and psychological barriers that hampered the crossing (Lianos and Chorafa 2013). A study conducted by the University of Patras showed how the distances between the two provinces of Patras and Lepanto have been significantly reduced (Pappas, Dimas, and Tsekouras 2010a; see Figure 19).

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<sup>63</sup> See: <http://www.eib.europa.eu/projects/loans/1996/19961138.htm>

<sup>64</sup> See also: <http://www.eib.europa.eu/infocentre/press/releases/all/1997/1997-061-ecu-370-mio-for-the-rion-antirion-bridge.htm>

According to Lianos and Chorafa (2013:89), infrastructure interventions in western Greece “improved internal accessibility, reducing the isolation of the mountain areas and increasing living standards and social equality”. Besides, they continue, “shorter transit times between mountain communities and main road links have resulted in improved social cohesion and community development”. Although it is difficult to establish the impact of the bridge on regional development, the bridge constitutes an important node within the Greek transport network, facilitating the road connections between mainland Greece, Peloponnese, and Athens. Yet, the passage of the strait has been privatised and monopolised, and the incomes generated from the transit have been secured in private hands for the next decades, elucidating who the beneficiaries of the bridge really are.

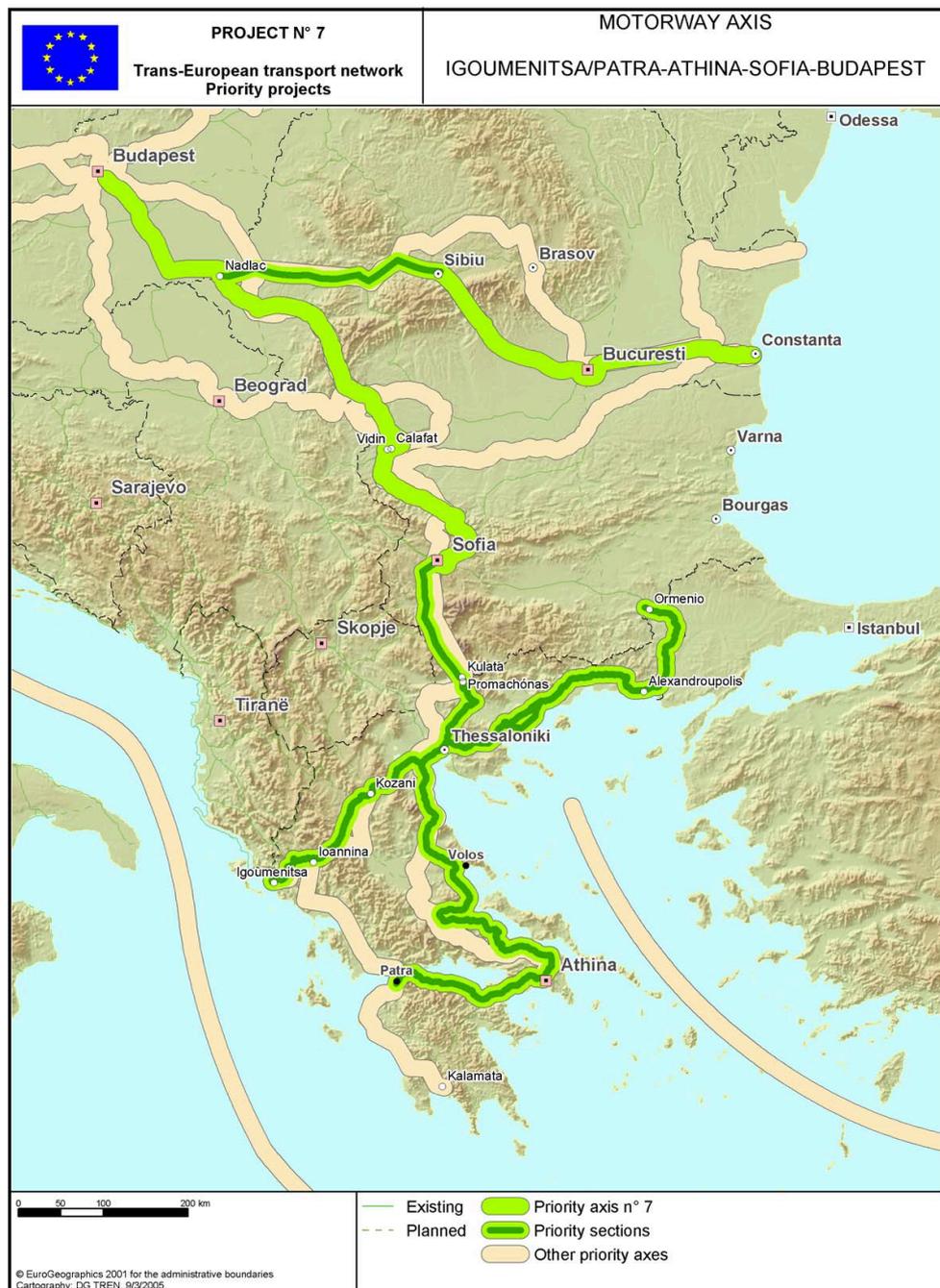


**Figure 19: Time-space compression around Patras after the construction of the Rio-Antirrio Bridge.** Duration of a 15-, 30-, and 60-minute journey (green, yellow and red areas, respectively) before (left) and after (right) the construction of the bridge, with Patras (above) and Lepanto (below) as points of departure. Source: Pappas, Dimas, and Tsekouras 2010a.

### *The second round of PPP and the burst of the crisis*

The success of the first round of PPP-funded works fostered further collaboration between the government and private capitals for the financing of public works under the framework of the TEN-T project (Kitsos 2014). In particular, the second round of PPPs, which saw the light after the 2004 Olympic Games, involved the modernisation of the so-called “axes of development”, i.e. the quadrilateral area between Patras,

Athens, Thessaloniki and Igoumenitsa/Ioannina as part of the TEN-T core project n. 7, aiming to connect the main Greek cities and ports between them and with the rest of Europe (*ibid.*, see also Figure 20).



**Figure 20: TEN-T Priority Project no. 7: Motorway Axis Igoumenitsa/Patras-Athina-Sofia-Budapest.**  
 Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/ten/transport/maps/doc/axes/pp07.pdf>

However, the second round did not prove as successful as the first one. Despite their appeal, some studies have critically pointed out that PPPs cannot account for unforeseeable or uncertain events and may overestimate traffic and revenue projections in order to obtain parliament approvals. In this case, what PPPs could not predict was the advent of the economic crisis, which resulted not only in the collapse

of revenues, due to the reduction in traffic volumes and the emergence of a “no-pay movement”, but also in the need for renegotiating the terms of the agreements, inflating state burden (Trezou, Petroutsatou, and Smyrnioudis 2011; Nikolaidis and Roumboutsos 2013; Domingues and Zlatkovic 2015). The renegotiation affected four out of five infrastructural works financed through the second round of PPPs, namely the Ionian, Kentriki, Aegean, and Olympia Odos.

### *The PATHE motorway*

According to INEA, the initial plan for the development of the Greek road network involved the construction and modernisation of two main axes crossing the country:

- “1) West to east following the route of the Via Egnatia, to connect the port of Igoumenitsa to Kipi on the Greek-Turkish border (680 km);
- 2) Modernisation of the existing 800 km Pathe road (Patras-Athina-Thessaloniki and Evzoni), which runs from southern Greece to the north, connecting Patras to Promahon on the Greek-Bulgarian border.”<sup>65</sup>

Initially, the European Parliament and Council Decision 1692/1996/EC foresaw the completion of the PATHE road for 2008. While most of the Egnatia Odos and the Athens-Thessaloniki highway had already been completed by that time, the Patras-Athens section was still under construction. The EC report on the implementation of priority projects (EC 2010, see Figure 21) expected the road works between Patras and Corinth to be concluded in 2014, but two years later another EC report (2012) postponed the termination of the works to 2015.

The EC, however, forgets to specify that the PATHE motorway was split into three main sections, regulated as PPPs through just as many concessions. In 2006, the 172 km Athens-Maliakos section was entrusted to the Spanish-Greek joint venture Nea Odos<sup>66</sup>, with the aim of turning it “into a model of reference for both Greek and international standards”<sup>67</sup>. The following year, a consortium of six companies called Aegean Motorway S.A. was granted the thirty-year concession for constructing and upgrading the 230 km Raches-Kleidi section (south of Thessaloniki), with the German HOCHTIEF Solutions AG holding 35% of the shares. The total cost of the project, tantamount to €1,3 billion, was financed from bank loans (44%), toll fees (23%),

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<sup>65</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/ten-t/ten-t-projects/projects-by-priority-project/priority-project-7>

<sup>66</sup> The same concessionaire was also responsible for the construction and modernisation of the Ionian Odos, the motorway connecting Patras to Ioannina in the north.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.neaodos.gr/description/?lang=en>

equity (10%), and combined EU and national contributions (23%) (Aegean Motorway S.A. 2015). In 2008, the construction and modernisation of the Olympia Odos, as the Patras-Athens section was renamed, was appointed to a consortium of five companies called Olympia Odos S.A.<sup>68</sup>, which has been granted the right of collecting tolls for 30 years in return for carrying out regular operations and maintenance.

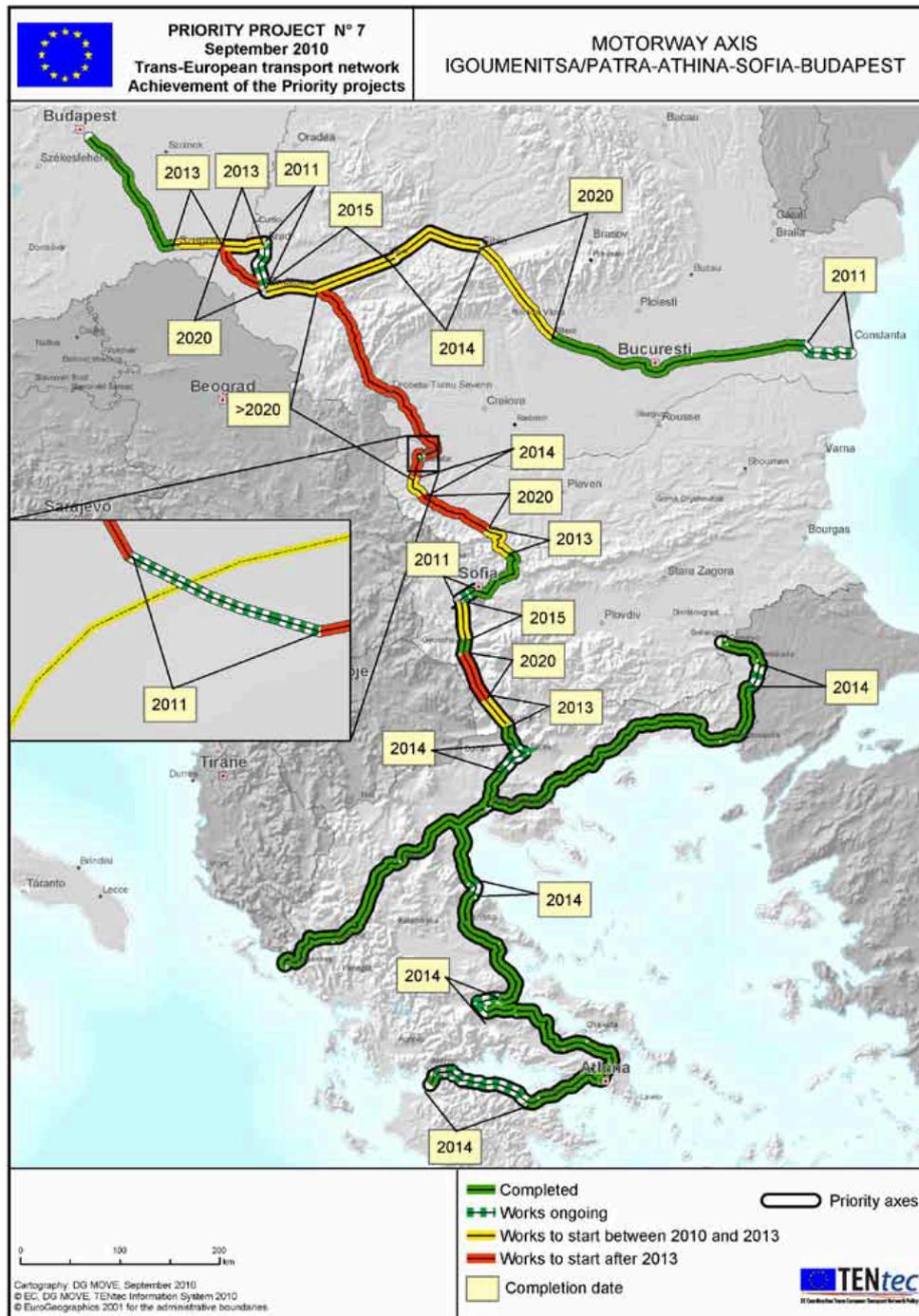


Figure 21: TEN-T Priority Project no. 7: achievement of projects.  
Source: EC 2010.

<sup>68</sup> A Société Anonyme in which the French company Vinci Concessions S.A.S. has the relative majority of shares (29.9%).

“We have shown that the way to complete projects is to have a government in place aiming to protect the public interest,” Prime Minister Tsipras said the day of the Olympia Odos inauguration in April 2017<sup>69</sup>. However, the government had little direct involvement in this strategic asset. The total cost of the project, amounting to almost €1.5 billion, has been financed by “a combination of private funds (bank loans and equity), European funds, the contribution of users and the Greek State”<sup>70</sup>: the latter corresponded to just 6% of the total participation.

Although the official websites of the companies involved for the modernisation of the PATHE motorway omit to mention it, the aforementioned projects have been suspended for three years with the advent of the economic crisis, forcing the government, the lenders, and the private concessionaires to renegotiate the terms of agreement (Kitsos 2014). The renegotiation process put the government in quite an awkward position: already straightjacketed by the first memorandum signed with the Troika, it needed to reach a compromise in order to continue to attract foreign investments, albeit without further burdening its public expenditures (Nikolaidis and Rouboutsos 2013; Kitsos 2014). The projects were eventually refinanced through European funds, relieving private concessionaires from financial risks and preventing the state from acquiring the companies’ shares (Kitsos 2014).

### *The Ionian Odos*

A similar sort occurred to the 196 km western coastal axis stretching from Antirrio to Ioannina in the north, called the Ionian motorway. As of 2015, the construction of the motorway, considered a project of national interest yet excluded from the TEN-T Priority Projects, was still underway, making Patras isolated from the rest of Greece<sup>71</sup>. When the OEM corridor was created in 2013, envisaging the multimodal and infrastructural development of the ports of Igoumenitsa and Patras, the European regulations added the western coastal axis among the core projects (see Figure 22), whose completion was expected before 2030.

The Ionian Odos was completed in early 2017, after a series of economic and legal issues had jeopardised its development. In 2006, the aforementioned Nea Odos was entrusted with a 30-year concession from the Greek government for the design, construction, maintenance, and exploitation of the motorway. The total cost of the

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<sup>69</sup> <http://news.gtp.gr/2017/04/11/olympia-odos-patra-bound-motorway-opens-to-traffic/>

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.olympiaodos.gr/en/project/Xrimatodotisi/>

<sup>71</sup> See note 30.

project amounted to €1,3 billion, almost half of that paid for by toll revenues from both the Ionian Odos and the Athens-Maliakos section of the PATHE motorway, managed by the same consortium (Nikolaidis and Roumboutsos 2013; Vanelislander et al. 2014). In 2008, the works began, with a completion date estimated in six years.



**Figure 22: Comprehensive and core networks: Roads, ports, railroad terminals (RRT) and airports.**  
 Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t-guidelines/maps\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t-guidelines/maps_en.htm); Regulation 1315/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

Despite the “Enhanced growth prospects and employment opportunities” predicted by the concessionaire<sup>72</sup>, the burst of the economic crisis imposed a severe reduction in traffic volumes, and consequently in toll revenues, the major source of income. Combined with the underestimation of delays and overruns caused by archaeological findings and land acquisitions, this resulted in the suspension of both works and funding, forcing the Greek Government, the lenders, and the company to renegotiate the contract (Nikolaidis and Rouboutsos 2013; Domingues and Zlatkovic 2015). In April 2013, the government announced the new terms of agreement, envisaging “an increase of public financial contribution, a decrease in scope, and the payment of claims” (Domingues and Zlatkovic 2015:11).

With the resumption of the works, the consortium can finally celebrate its determination to “change the map of Greece, ...creat[ing] value for the country, our local communities and shareholders”<sup>73</sup>. The promotional documentary released by the company in September 2017<sup>74</sup>, accompanied by a catchy funky tune, reassures its consumers (and stakeholders) about the completion of the works, guiding them along the journey through breath-taking landscapes between the mountains and the sea. The motorway, cutting across green olive groves through snaky roads, luminous galleries, state-of-the-art bridges and twisted interchanges, provides safety and cleanliness, due to the constant monitoring of its operations and the readiness of its emergency services. Despite the financial troubles, the consortium can now breathe a sigh of relief.

The question of who the beneficiaries of these works are remains open, especially in the context of the economic crisis. The improvement of road infrastructures, whose main purpose was to expand the European single market towards Eastern Europe and the Middle East, has certainly ameliorated the logistical connections within the country. Yet, these strategic assets have often represented a financial and political risk for Greece itself, compelled to resort to European and private capitals, without benefitting from their completion. A handful of companies, often intermingled among the various PPPs, will indeed exploit the works, sharing the profits from the tolls for decades. In times of crisis, moreover, the various governments have been on a knife-edge, pressured to comply with ever more stringent budgetary

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<sup>72</sup> <http://www.neaodos.gr/benefits/?lang=en>

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.neaodos.gr/vision-mission-values/?lang=en>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lq9VAARaTZU>

regulations, maintain and attract foreign private investments, and obtain political approval while implementing draconian socio-economic measures.

*The exception: the Egnatia motorway*

The Egnatia Odos followed a slightly different path. Formed in 1997 when the PPP was still in its experimental phase, the Egnatia Odos S.A. is a public company with the Greek state as its sole shareholder. The company, appointed with the design, construction, maintenance, and exploitation of the motorway, operates in the framework of private law, with the supervision of the Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning, and Public Works<sup>75</sup>. The costs for the completion of the 670 km motorway, spanning from Igoumenitsa to the Turkish border, amounted to €6 billion, financed by the EU (through the CF, the ERDF, and the TEN-T budget, for half of the total share), the EIB, the Community Support Framework, and the Greek government.

According to the website of the company, the motorway does not simply provide quicker east-west connections, facilitating internal mobility around the main northern Greek cities. Rather, it represents a strategic route that “will enable Greece to play an active role in shaping the new regional Balkan market”<sup>76</sup>, extending its projection even towards eastern European countries and Asia Minor (see Figure 23). The nine vertical axes surrounding the motorway and conjoining the Balkans – a project that still involves the Egnatia Odos S.A. – are supposed to foster “friendly relations and unhindered communication between neighbouring populations for ages harbouring deep-seated prejudices against each other”<sup>77</sup>. Moreover, the completion of the road, connecting the poorest parts of central Greece, is ambitiously expected to “boost trade, tourism and social life in these regions, while halting and reversing the trend of rural depopulation”<sup>78</sup>.

As Panebianco and Schürmann remark (2002), assessing the impact of the motorway on the socio-economic development of the region and predicting whether and how these expectations will be actually fulfilled is a difficult task. The idea that investments in transportation systems necessarily bring socio-economic development is often a general public perception, rather than a deterministic outcome (Tsiouka 2015). The same determinism may be found in a certain “postmodern discourse on

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<sup>75</sup> <http://www.accessnetproject.eu/index.php/project-partners/egnatia-odos-sa>

<sup>76</sup> <http://www.egnatia.gr/page/default.asp?la=2&id=25>

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

boundaries [which] has used these observed realities within a specific sphere (economic) of human activity to suggest that similar changes will take place within additional cultural, national and social spheres” (Newman and Paasi 1998:199). Yet, the aspirations of the company reflect European geo-economic imperatives, striving for the creation of a borderless market space expanding its influence across national and European borders, towards Eastern Europe and the Middle East (Sparke 1998).



**Figure 23: The Egnatia Odos within the Balkan region and Eastern Europe.**  
Source: <http://www.accessnetproject.eu/index.php/project-partners/egnatia-odos-sa>

#### **4.6 Spatial conflicts: when “neoliberalism arrives in town”**

Despite its attempts to homogenise and flatten space for the creation of a global borderless market, the neoliberal project to construct a European common market has unfolded in an uneven manner, assuming variegated forms and producing divergences, contradictions, and exceptions at and across different scales (Peck and Theodore 2007;

N. Smith 2008). The dominant tendency of capitalism has historically dovetailed with its inner “*systemic* production of geoinstitutional differentiation” (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010:184, their emphasis) generating a “multilayered scaffolding of intertwined, coevolving spatial scales upon which historically specific interlinkages between processes of capital accumulation, forms of state territorial organization, and patterns of urbanization have been crystallized” (Lefebvre 1991:145). Given its constant interrelations and connections with diverse localised forces, neoliberalism has acquired a “polysemic” character (*ibid.*), meaning “many different things depending on one’s vantage point” (Ong 2006:1; cp. Balibar 2002).

Global, state, and urban social relations do not dissolve during this new phase of capitalist development, but they relate with each other and transform their functions, as part of the “same dynamic of global sociospatial restructuring” (Lefebvre 1991:139). Whereas the state has the crucial role of mediating between global capital and local instances, the urban likewise acquires great relevance: the urban space “continues to ensure that links are properly maintained between the various *flows* involved: flows of energy and labour, of commodities and capital” (Lefebvre 1991:347, his emphasis). It is in the urban that “counterprojects and counterspaces can be produced, defended, and ultimately expanded in scale” (Brenner 1997:154). In neoliberal societies, the urban space becomes the site of intervention of state hegemonic practices, reproducing and perpetuating the relations of domination at a lower scale (Kipfer 2008).

Although “vital for the solidification of capitalism” (Kipfer 2008:201), the urban discloses the inner inconsistencies and distortions of capitalism (Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard 2007). Since economic networks and social relationships have become increasingly independent from spatial fixity, cities are subject to growing economic pressures and intensifying competition (Sassen 2001), turning into “laboratories for institutional innovations and political-ideological projects” (Ronneberger 2008:143). In the urban space, European, national, and local stances converge and renegotiate their claims, potentially generating resistance against the process of pervasive capitalist domination. Whereas the production of urban space “is hegemonic to the degree that it envelops and incorporates the daily aspirations, desires, and dreams of subaltern populations” (Kipfer 2008:200), “collective social praxis cannot be subsumed completely under this systemic logic: there always remains something that escapes domestication” (Ronneberger 2008:135).

Adopting the urban as a unit of analysis, the municipality of Patras emerges, quite surprisingly, as one of the actors that has carved out its own space and challenged the hierarchical and rigid spatial planning framework. Given the dramatic reduction in port traffic and the subsequent underutilisation of the old port<sup>79</sup>, the municipality has been claiming public spaces for the local community, in order to provide the city centre with an open and direct access to the coastal area and wipe out its infamous reputation of “seaside city without sea”. Yet, it has faced legal and political problems that have undermined its expectations.

The demarcation of land uses constitutes the main issue, as it can be solved only at higher levels of legislation and planning, creating “interspatial competition” among several agents at and across different scales (Miller 2007). The whole seafront belongs indeed to the MMM<sup>80</sup> and is managed by OLPa. Out of 12 km of seaside (which became 39 after the 2011 Kallikratis reform), seven are officially considered as port zone, preventing the municipality from executing any kind of works or interventions (Figures 24 and 25). The presence of the railway cutting across the old port area and the fences surrounding it also limit the entrance of pedestrians and vehicles, restricting the public access to the seaside.

Given the underutilisation of the old port, in recent years OLPa and the municipality have come to mutual agreements and signed a pre-contract with the MMM, involving the concession, on the part of the former, of the management rights on certain parts of the old port<sup>81</sup>. As a result of one of these agreements reached in 2010, the municipality commissioned a study to the University of Patras, in order to analyse the city-port relations, capture the opinion of the citizens about the port, and understand what projects could have been implemented to open public accesses to the

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<sup>79</sup> The original idea behind the expansion of the port envisaged the complementarity between the two ports. The old port should have handled about 20% of the traffic, maintaining the lines to and from Brindisi, while the remaining 80% should have been moved to the new port, thus including the connections with Venice, Ancona, and Bari. This solution, however, was rejected by the shipping companies. The economic crisis and the dramatic decline in the port traffic provided the solution: the ship traffic has begun to decrease significantly since 2008, and the new port now serves all the lines (semi-structured interview with Mr Milionis, 12/02/2015). The old port, instead, hosts four main activities: the marina in the northern part, disembarkation services, commercial activities, and fisheries. Since it lost all embarkation and check-in operations, it has remained largely underutilised (semi-structured interview with OLPa Director of Development, 11/02/2015).

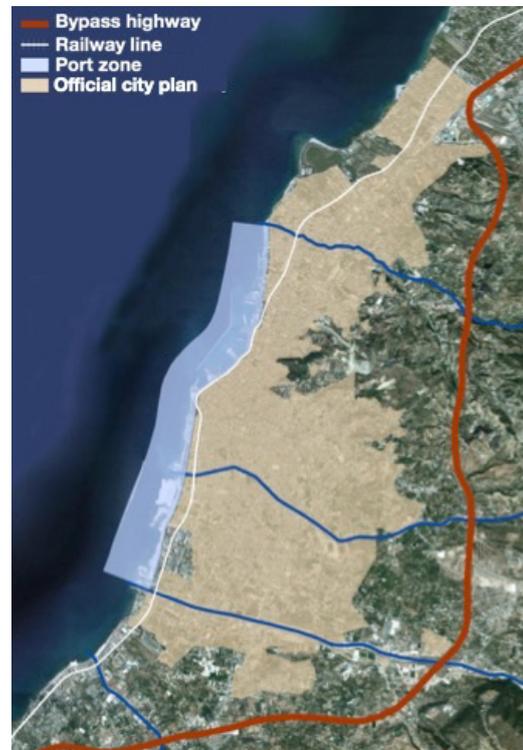
<sup>80</sup> Over the last decade, the MMM has been alternately merged into the Ministry of the Economy, according to the different governmental decisions.

<sup>81</sup> Semi-structured interview with ADEP Head of Planning, 16/06/2015.

seafront<sup>82</sup>. The study, led by three professors of three different departments<sup>83</sup>, tackles the issue of port-city relations along three lines of enquiry: technical, economic and spatial, presenting alternative solutions for the utilisation of the seafront.



**Figure 24: Distinct regions in the waterfront.**  
Source: Pappas 2012.



**Figure 25: Land uses in Patras.**  
Source: Pappas 2012.

The first issue introduces the whole work and summarizes the main findings, highlighting the current problems of the waterfront and the potential interventions that the municipality could carry out. It also presents the results of a survey, conducted on a sample of 600 local residents stratified by age and gender, which emphasised the importance of the removal of port activities from certain areas of the waterfront (67.2% of the interviewees) and the necessity to launch a redevelopment program of the coastline through the realisation of recreational and green areas (70.1% of the interviewees).

With regard to the economic section, the main result of the study is “that the contribution of the port to the region in terms of product, employment, and income is low, or anyway lower than expected” (Pappas, Dimas, and Tsekouras 2010b).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Prof. Pappas, Department of Architecture, was responsible for the spatial approach, identifying the relations between the city and the port; Prof. Dimas, Department of Mechanical Engineering, dealt with the functional approach, exploring the various functions of the port according to its demands and needs; Prof. Tsekouras, Department of Economics, was in charge of the economic approach, analysing the economic role of the port and its importance for the city.

According to Prof. Tsekouras<sup>84</sup>, this outcome could have been used to strengthen the position of the municipality in potential negotiations with the central government and OLPa. However, the study acknowledges, “the relatively small impact of the operations of the port of Patras on the local economy is the result of its small economic size, and not of its inability to develop economic links with the rest of the local economy”. In fact, it suggests, “an increase in the port activities (links to touristic and cruise ships, commercial section, containers, logistics) can generate a significant positive impact on the local economy” (*ibid.*).

In relation to the spatial section, the report evaluates the territorial divisions, as emerged from the protocol of cooperation signed by the municipality and OLPa, and suggests potential interventions for the coastal area, in order to open public access to the seaside for the systematic use by residents and tourists, promote the functional integration of the coastal areas into the urban fabric, and improve the attractiveness of the city (*ibid.*). The main idea envisages the redevelopment of the entire coastal zone into an urban zone, with the exception of the two port areas, in order to activate a common project for the restoration of the whole seafront (see Figure 26)<sup>85</sup>. The projects of intervention should have focused on the removal of security barriers, the renovation and modernisation of the seafront, the realisation of cycling and walking paths, the creation of a green area in front of the new port, and the establishment of leisure, recreational and cultural activities.

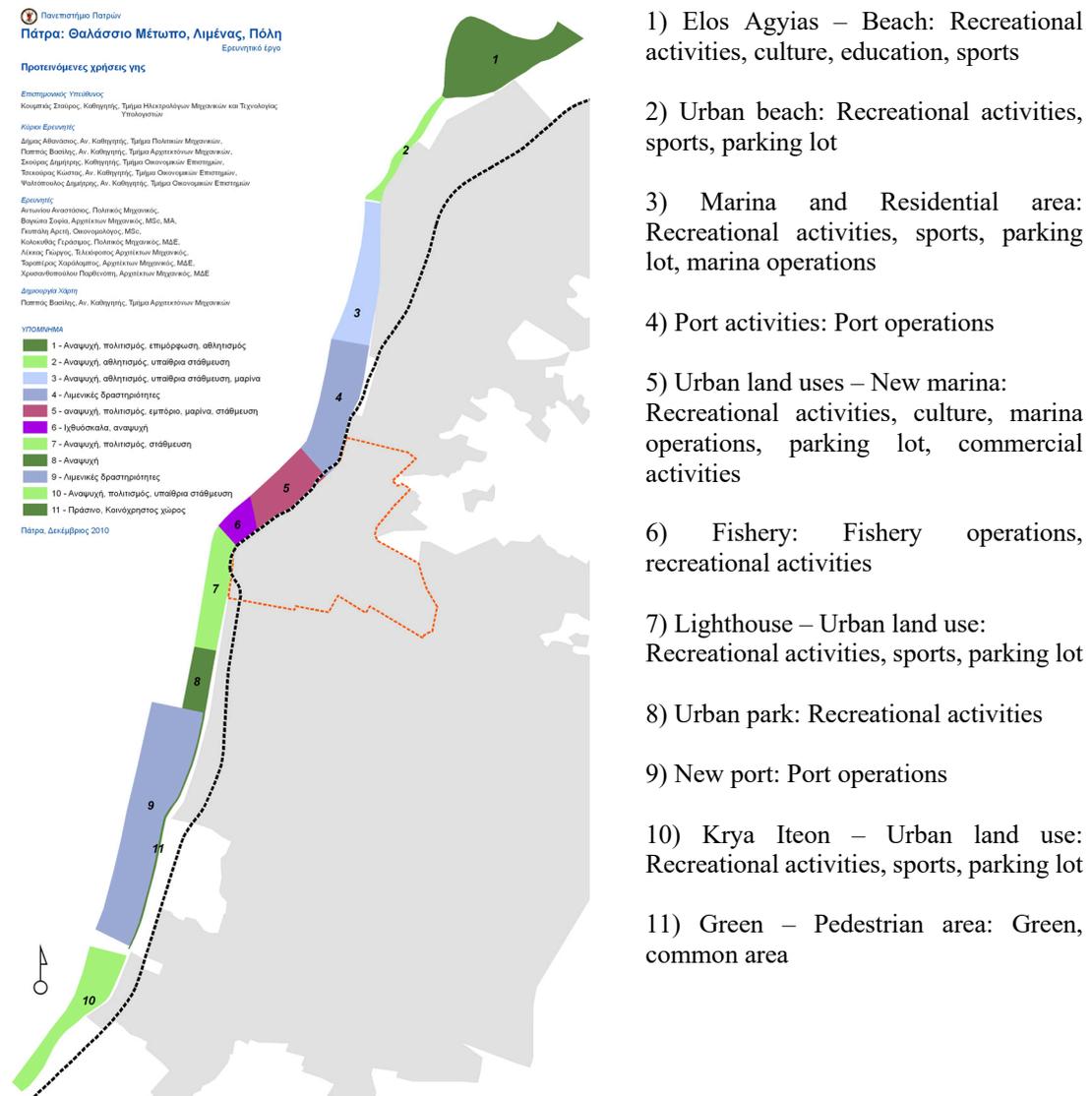
However, the implementation of such projects proved to be more difficult than expected, for economic and legal reasons. The financial crisis has aggravated the regional economic depression, hindering the use of public resources for extraordinary activities. Legal problems remain, as the area is still registered as a port zone, thus belonging to the Ministry of the Economy. Despite being the legal entity in charge of the coastal zone, OLPa could renounce to manage or use the area and return it to the Ministry of the Economy, which in turn could entrust other authorities with the permission to provide for it. This procedure, though, is not straightforward, since the Greek legislation formally prohibits any kind of intervention in port zones by entities other than port authorities. The new government assured that it would find a solution

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<sup>84</sup> Semi-structured interview, 22/04/2015.

<sup>85</sup> Alternatively, the report suggested that the municipality should have focused on redeveloping the part between the two ports (sections 7 and 8 in the figure), as that represents the area where the majority of the population is concentrated.

to overcome this longstanding issue, but legal cavils remain problematic, delaying the concessions made by OLPa and the government.



- 1) Elos Agyias – Beach: Recreational activities, culture, education, sports
- 2) Urban beach: Recreational activities, sports, parking lot
- 3) Marina and Residential area: Recreational activities, sports, parking lot, marina operations
- 4) Port activities: Port operations
- 5) Urban land uses – New marina: Recreational activities, culture, marina operations, parking lot, commercial activities
- 6) Fishery: Fishery operations, recreational activities
- 7) Lighthouse – Urban land use: Recreational activities, sports, parking lot
- 8) Urban park: Recreational activities
- 9) New port: Port operations
- 10) Krya Iteon – Urban land use: Recreational activities, sports, parking lot
- 11) Green – Pedestrian area: Green, common area

**Figure 26: Area division and proposed land uses for the different zones.**  
**Source: Pappas, Dimas, and Tsekouras 2010b.**

Besides, relationships between municipality and OLPa have not always been smooth and unperturbed: periods of relative calmness alternated with moments of open conflicts and vibrant discussions, raising the issue to a national level. The peak of this conflict was reached in January 2012 when the then mayor of Patras, Mr Dimaras, the deputy mayor, Mr Sigalas, and a municipal employee were temporarily arrested for having removed parts of the security fences around the gate no. 1 of the old port, in opposition to the bureaucratic lengthiness that impeded the municipality to take full possession of the area (TVXS 2012). Although the arrests lasted few hours, the media and political exposure of the event was notable, transcending the local and reverberating to the national level (see Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008).

Far from being progressive or antagonistic, the activism of the municipality remains deeply institutionalised, impelled only by the politico-electoral pressures of satisfying the needs of its citizens. Only few years before, the municipality had been involved in closing down other kind of spaces, such as the self-organised camp set up by migrants in the proximity of the old port. The camp attracted the crosscutting opposition of the municipality, the prefecture of Achaea, and local citizens, who found an association called Πόλις εάλω (Polis Ealo, meaning “The fallen city”) to denounce and protest against the squalid living conditions of the camp, its dirtiness, and lack of sanitary systems. The hygienic pretexts hid nonetheless economic reasons, which the then local administration could not ignore. Located in the middle of a wealthy residential area, the camp reduced the house market value in its surroundings, preventing homeowners from selling or renting their property, and constructor companies from pursuing urban redevelopment (Lafazani 2013). Aversion to the camp became widespread across several levels of governance, leading to the closure and dismantlement of the camp by the prefecture of Achaea in July 2009.

### *Symbolic spaces*

In the process of production of space, Lefebvre identifies a third moment that pertains to the “symbolic dimension of space” (Schmid 2008:37), coexistent and intertwining with the aforementioned spatial practices and representations of space. Spaces of representation, as he calls them, correspond to the “space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, ...the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 1991:39, his emphasis). Representational spaces are related to the meanings and signifiers attributed to particular natural or artificial places, embracing “the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations” (*ibid.*:42).

Alive with symbols, spaces of representation are strictly connected to the history of people and individuals, and to the work of anthropologists, ethnologists and psychoanalysts who help discover those meanings and their changes through time (Lefebvre 1991). Harvey’s all-encompassing view is no longer sufficient to grasp the myriad of vivid and dynamic traits that pervade space, the “multiplicity of trajectories” (Massey 2005) intersecting over space and modifying it. “Walkscapes” become not only powerful methodological tools to capture the intermingling of spatial relations

(Brambilla 2015a), but also a “tactic” that insinuates itself into capitalist space, slowly reshaping or re-appropriating it (De Certeau 1984).

Through their movement, local citizens subtract the new port spaces from the dominant geopolitical and logistical purposes for which they were created. Every morning and evening people walk, jog, or cycle through the empty new port area, otherwise bustling with lorries and cars frantically amassing towards the check-ins, waiting to embark onto the afternoon-scheduled ferryboats. Some would stop their bike in the area of the uncompleted commercial dock and extract their fishing tackle, taking advantage of the absence of security patrols and the calmness following the departure of the ferries (Figure 27). Others would drive their car speedily along the almost deserted 1.5 km road, avoiding the jam and the traffic lights of the parallel national road.



**Figure 27: Fishermen in the new port area.**  
Source: picture by the author, 05/04/2015.

Immediately north of the new port, the renovated urban park finally allows local citizens to have a direct and open access to the sea. Strolling along the footpath that crosses a small wood and reaches the old lighthouse (recently transformed into a fashionable bistro), the citizenry seems to have come into possession of a narrow yet picturesque strip of land. The area was supposed to host the Face B of the new port, but the severe economic crisis and the decline in port traffic have changed the spatial

destination of the area<sup>86</sup>. Despite the legal disputes over land, officially registered as port zone and owned by the Ministry of the Economy, in the last few years both the municipality and OLPa reached an agreement to renovate the area.

Even before the termination of the works, it was interesting to notice that many people were already using the park for jogging, walking, cycling, or simply relaxing. Among them were also some migrants living in the surrounding shacks, who took advantage of the free Wi-Fi connection of a nearby café to call their families. The most audacious would swim towards the quays of the new port in the attempt of conquering their “right to the ferry” (Spathopoulou 2016).

With regard to the old port, most citizens seem to be concordant on the fact that the port expansion has had beneficial effects for traffic and pollution levels in the city centre, and for the logistical networks around the city. For the manager of the Galaxy City Centre Hotel, a newly-refurbished family-run hotel located only a few metres away from the central Trion Simmachon Square, the problem related to the old port was the noise produced by the generators of the ships and the pollution of trucks driving through the city<sup>87</sup>. The same issue is noticed by the employee of another travel agency: according to him, forasmuch as the old port and part of the city centre are built over the water, the arrival of ferryboats “looked like an earthquake”<sup>88</sup>. For one of the employees of the central Acropole Hotel, with the old port there were too many trucks coming and going from the city centre: “it was a mess in terms of traffic”. The new port, instead, “is much bigger and out of town, and it also has big accesses, so trucks don’t have to pass through the city centre”<sup>89</sup>.

The construction of the new port, coupled with the bypass around Patras, appears to have relieved the city centre of long-time problems related to traffic, noise, and pollution. Local citizens have re-appropriated some of the empty and underutilised spaces left by the relocation of port activities. Facing directly the city centre, the old port is an everyday destination for commuters using the parking lots or the local train station adjacent to the port area. In the evening, it becomes an attraction for those who

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<sup>86</sup> The study of the University of Patras remarked that the Face B of the new port is not necessary for port development in both short and long terms, as the new port could handle the traffic expectations (Pappas, Dimas, and Tsekouras 2010a). With the delivery of the study, the municipality obtained some leverage to claim the area in order to provide the densely populated neighbourhoods surrounding it with a direct access to the sea.

<sup>87</sup> Semi-structured interview with the manager of the Galaxy City Centre Hotel, 24/06/2015.

<sup>88</sup> Informal interview with the employee of Manolopoulou Travel Agency, 06/02/2015.

<sup>89</sup> Informal interview with the receptionist of the Acropole Hotel, 22/06/2015.

want to take a stroll down the quiet berths or relax in one of those fancy cafés along the marina.

However, the fence separating some parts of the port facility from the urban area has not been removed, causing opposition among inhabitants. The question of an open and direct access to the sea is still a burning issue, debated at both local and national level. An employee of a family-run travel agency in the area of the old port suggested, “they [municipality and OLPa] should remove the fences and the borders, and give the area to the public”<sup>90</sup>, building some shops, activities, and bars, rather than using those areas as car and truck parks.

Politicians and ministers have often promised to solve the legal chicaneries that impede the municipality to exploit those spaces. This topic was discussed during the 2015 first electoral campaign<sup>91</sup> and raised by the Minister of Mercantile Marine, Mr Dritzas, on the occasion of a congress organised by the newspaper Peloponnesus in Patras in June 2015<sup>92</sup>, but it remains still open. According to the manager of another travel agency, “The local government is supposed to do something to re-qualify and redevelop the area, there are some projects for that, but then people talk, governments change, things are delayed, and nothing happens”<sup>93</sup>.

The spatial transformations affecting the port area and the port-city relations as a result of the restructuring of European geographies of production and logistics have had concrete repercussions on the daily lives of local citizens. Some of them might have needed to change their habits, customs, and even connections with others or with the city itself, whereas some others might have benefited from the new logistical network, gaining time or money in their everyday commute. Yet, some people have readapted and re-appropriated the spaces of capitalist development, tracing trajectories and relations that transcend the original scopes and horizons for which those same spaces were designed and constructed, reimagining alternative urban geographies (see De Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1994, 2005).

## **4.7 Conclusion**

The chapter examined how the spatio-temporal developments under neoliberal globalisation have produced and changed the port/border area of Patras, analysing its

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<sup>90</sup> Informal interview with the manager of the Mertikas Travel Agency, 30/01/2015.

<sup>91</sup> See note 84.

<sup>92</sup> See note 49.

<sup>93</sup> Informal interview with the manager of the Rose Travel Agency, 30/01/2015.

peculiarities and uneven configurations. It has done so by grasping the multi-scalar processes that, in the framework of the neoliberal reconfiguration of power relations at global and European level (Harvey 2005; Fouskas and Gökay 2019), have transformed the socio-political and economic orientation of nation states, prompting negotiations and contestations on the ground. In particular, the chapter has focused on the spatial transformations brought about by the development of logistics, which has massively contributed to create a widespread homogeneous space, functional to the reproduction of capitalist relations (Lefebvre 1991; Cowen 2010, 2014).

The creation of a European single market and the implementation of the TEN-T have engendered significant transformations of the European space. Internal borders between member states have been demolished, while the introduction of the Schengen Agreements and the Treaty of Maastricht have accelerated the process of de-territorialisation of political and economic activities. Member states have progressively negotiated their roles and reallocated parts of their functions to supra-national institutions for the promotion and development of the internal market, although maintaining significant geopolitical and economic functions (Brenner et al. 2003b; Brenner 2004).

The realisation of the TEN-T, financed through European and national funds, has proceeded in such direction: the empty borderless space has been filled with a capillary network of transport, energy, and telecommunication infrastructures aimed at fostering the circulation of capital, goods, services, and people within it, removing spatial and temporal barriers. The enlargement of the common market to eastern European countries has facilitated the development of the TEN-T, which now stretches from east to west, linking Atlantic countries to the Black Sea, and from south to north, connecting previously isolated Greece with central and northern European member states through the eastern Balkan countries. However, neoliberalism has developed in a highly uneven and variegated manner, generating contradictions, negotiations, and struggles (Peck and Tickell 2002; Ong 2006; Cowen and N. Smith 2009; Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010). The implementation of TEN-T has either been adjusted in response to geopolitical changes and different market needs, or clashed with national and local factors that have modified its course.

This is the case of Patras, where the intertwining combination of multi-scalar geopolitical, economic, and logistical factors has contributed to significant spatial alterations in its port area, first pushing for its expansion and then rearranging its

reduced roles and functions. Born with a strong connection to the local economy, first as a port of export for the locally produced raisins and then as a driving force for the industrial development of the region, the port later turned into an important hub in the transportation network, facilitating and accelerating the circulation of goods between the Middle East and the rest of Europe. Driven by increasing traffic figures, the port has undergone a significant process of expansion, with the relative improvement of, and connection to, the surrounding railway and road infrastructures. However, the re-opening of the Balkan route and the logistical evolution of Greek road system have negatively affected the spatial role of the port of Patras in the transportation network, its economic influence now being limited to the surrounding region.

With the burst of the economic crisis and the decrease in transit traffic, other social agents have intervened to liberate specific places from the absorbing logics of capitalist operations, breaking the homogeneous space of the internal market and staking their own territory. One of them is the municipality, which has always been active in claiming urban spaces to give its inhabitants a proper access to the sea. Its requests often clashed with the needs of OLPa, although the underutilisation of the old port has smoothed the relationships between them. Local citizens have also engaged in shaping and readapting the spaces of capitalist development according to their ideas and needs. They have done so by reimagining their use in alternative ways and re-appropriating previously abandoned areas through a multiplicity of activities and interactions.

By looking at the development of logistics and its impact on the port/border area of Patras, the chapter has argued that the analysis of borders cannot omit to contemplate the overarching political-economic context in which borders are located and that makes them significant. However, neoliberalism is not the only social force producing and shaping borders. The next chapters will discuss the other two processes that, together with neoliberalism, have configured border spaces, namely securitisation and autonomy of migration. Similarly, such forces are neither predetermined nor homogeneous, but continuously changing and adapting to evolving geopolitical or socio-economic situations, while reproducing divergences and contrasts within them. It is only the combined reading and understanding of the three processes, I argue, that will lay the basis for the conceptualisation of borders as “meeting points”.

## Annex 1: Main infrastructural projects in Greece

MAIN INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS							
TYPE	FRAMEWORK	PROJECT	FUNDING BODIES	ESTIMATED COSTS	DURATION	REFERENCES	NOTES
Port	TEN-T Funding Project	Port of Patras	- EIB - ERDF - National Funds	€ 200 Mo.	1996-2011	- EC 1993 - EC 1996a - EU Parliament and Council 1996 - Greek Law 4081/2012	- Minor works completed in 2015 - Phase B of the port will never be realised
		Port of Igoumenitsa	- CF - National Funds	n.a.	n.a.	- EC 1993 - EC 1995b - EU Parliament and Council 1996 - EC 1996a - EC 1997 - EC 2001 - EC 2014b	
Rail	TEN-T Priority Project 22	Railway Section Patras-Athens	- CF - NSRF	€ 920 M (71 km Kiato - Rododafni)	2006-2017 (est.)	- EC 2001 - EC 2005 - EC 2014b	
			- NSRF	€ 502 M (27.6 km Rododafni - Rio)	2012-2017 (est.)	- EC 2001 - EC 2014b	
			- CF	€ 168 M (Rio - Patras)	2017-2022	- EC 2001 - EC 2014b	
			n.a.	n.a. (Connection with port of Patras)	After 2020	- EC 2014b	Discussion phase
	TEN-T Priority Project 29	Railway Section Ioannina-Antirrio (187 km)	- CF/ERDF		2006-2014 (est.)	- EU Parliament and Council 1996 - NEA 2004 - ECORYS 2006 EC 2012	Cancelled
Railway section Patras-Kalamata (265 km)		- CF/ERDF		2006-2014 (est.)	- EU Parliament and Council 1996 - NEA 2004 - ECORYS 2006	Postponed	
Road	TEN-T Priority Project 07	Egnatia Odos Igoumenitsa – Ioannina – Thessaloniki – Alexandroupoli (670 km)	- EIB - CF/ERDF - National Funds	€ 6,000 M	Early 1990s - 2006	- EC 1993 - EC 1995b - EC 1995c - EU Parliament and Council 1996 - EC 1996a - EC 1997 - EC 2000b - EC 2001 - ECORYS 2006	
		PATHE motorway Olympia Odos Elefsina – Corinth – Patras – Pyrgos (190 km)	- EIB - CF/ERDF - National Funds - PPP (Olympia Odos SA)	€ 2,138 M	2008 - 2017	- EC 1993 - EC 1995b - EU Parliament and Council 1996 - EC 1996a - EC 1997 - NEA 2004 - EC 2014b	Section Patras-Pyrgos as national road
		Rio-Antirrio Bridge	- EIB - CF/ERDF - PPP (Gefyra SA)	€ 802.7 M	1998-2004	- EC 1993 - EC 1996a - OMEGA Centre – UCL 2010	Now part of Ionian Road
		Patra Bypass	- EIB - CF/ERDF	n.a.	1990s-2002	- EC 1993 - EC 1995b - EC 1996a - EC 2000b	Now part of Ionian Road
	TEN-T Funding Project	Ionian Odos Antirrio – Ioannina (196 km)	- EIB - CF/ERDF - National Funds - PPP (Nea Odos SA)	€ 1,100 M	2008-2017	- EC 1993 - ECORYS 2006	Downgraded as national road project

## 5 Border restrictions

Where there's law there's injustice  
Lev Tolstoy 1867, *War and Peace*.

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will assess the process of securitisation as the second force that contributes to the formation and configuration of borders, thoroughly intertwined with capitalist dynamics. In the analysis of the process of securitisation, the chapter will not merely concentrate on the multiplication of border mechanisms and their capability to emerge outside and inside nation states' external borders. Rather, it will conceive securitisation as an ongoing, variegated, and uneven process, activated through a complex assemblage of European, national, and multilateral policies and practices that constantly create, disseminate, dismantle, and dislocate borders, disciplining the mobility of capital, goods, and people outside, within, and across the European territory.

The chapter, therefore, intersects and expands the work of a group of border scholars attentive to the ways in which the process of border securitisation, within the peculiar context of capitalist development, regulates accesses and circulations of flows at European scale, continuously erecting or demolishing physical, social, and legal barriers for the correct and safe functioning of the internal market (see De Genova 2008; De Genova and Peutz 2010; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017; Tazzioli 2017a). Rather than epitomising state domination over territories or population, the proliferation of mechanisms of control within, across, and outside state borders, with their corollary of externalised and privatised practices, aims at safeguarding and facilitating the logistical circulation of flows across the European space. The increasing restrictiveness of migration and asylum policies, part and parcel of the European border and migration regime, has targeted the mobility of migrants, decelerating their "differential inclusion" in the European labour market (De Genova 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012, 2013).

In light of the foregoing, the chapter raises two interrelated arguments. First, it maintains that the analysis of border securitisation needs to be comprehended within the vaster framework of "operations of capital" under which it is subsumed (Neilson 2012; Neilson and Rossiter 2013; Mezzadra and Neilson 2015). Rather than simply fostering or blocking certain mobilities, the chapter argues that security and migration

policies are functional to the production and reproduction of capitalist relations, operating as filters for the gradual inclusion and circulation of cheap labour force into Europe (see also De Genova 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012). The increasing securitisation of (certain kinds of) mobilities, it is hereby stated, does not respond as much to the necessity of protecting western societies and fortifying their borders against an alleged invasion, but rather to the capitalist requirement of controlling and managing the logistics of flows, guaranteeing their safe circulation.

Second, the chapter argues that the process of border securitisation has not always unfolded according to a homogeneous and predictable path. Instead, it has developed in an uneven and variegated manner, raising exceptions, contradictions, and conflicts among local inhabitants, workers, and migrants. The analysis of the process of border securitisation will be from time to time enriched through the examination of situated and local patterns, aiming to capture and evaluate the repercussions of such process on the everyday materiality of the border. Just like neoliberalism, it is argued, so the process of border securitisation has entailed a multiplicity of interrelations, negotiations, and conflicts among a variety of agents that have configured the port/border area of Patras in its unique way.

The chapter will unfold in two sections, corresponding to two intertwining moments in the process of border securitisation. The first part will look at the development of migration and asylum policies in Greece, and their repercussions on the mobility and status of migrants stranded in the abandoned factories in front of the new port. Rather than constituting a well-rounded architecture of measures to protect the so-called “fortress Europe”, the multiplicity of migration and asylum policies generates an exploitable and docile labour force to be employed in the Greek labour market and circulated across Europe, disclosing their profound neoliberal character.

The second part of the chapter will examine the implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code in the port/border area of Patras. Just as FRONTEX operates along the European external borders to identify and deter potential threats, so at smaller scale OLPa safeguards, through the dispositions of the ISPS Code, the steady flow of capital, goods, and people within and across crucial logistical nodes, detecting and repelling unwanted mobilities. The analysis of the ISPS Code and its implementation in the port/border area of Patras aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the border as part and parcel of the mechanisms determined by neoliberal and, in particular, logistical imperatives

(Cowen 2007, 2010; Martin 2012).

In analysing the dispositions of the European border and migration regime and their intermingling with the process of logistical management of flows at European level, the chapter will evince that the combined outcomes of logistical networks and securitisation measures in the port/border area of Patras have produced a space that is simultaneously homogeneous and fragmented, to facilitate the movement of capital, commodities, services, and people while guaranteeing the correct and safe unfolding of logistical activities through security controls and bureaucratic measures. This space is composed not only of walls, security checks, metal detectors, and fences, but also of specific policies that determine who can cross the border, who has the right to stay and at what conditions, who can claim asylum, and who must leave the country. In relation and contraposition to these dominant policies and practices, migrants have created and shaped their own space, in the attempt to escape towards Italy and the rest of Europe.

## **5.2 The development of a border and migration regime in Greece**

### *Irregular, exploitable and criminal: the creation of the migrant subject*

The resurgence of borders does not simply entail the erection and fortification of tangible security mechanisms and visible fence or apparatuses of control. Rather, it also involves the elaboration and implementation of less visible policies and legal dispositions that regulate the access, permanence, detention, and disposal of migrant subjects, imposing serious constraints on the potential formation of a migrant subjectivity (Mountz et al. 2002). As migration tendencies in Greece started to show a positive net rate at the beginning of the 1990s, in parallel with the creation and extension of the European common market, the first migration and asylum policies saw the light. When translated into the national territory, the Schengen and Dublin dispositions intertwined with, and moulded, national policies, creating a multi-scalar pattern of regulations and procedures that aimed to keep migrant flows into an irregular status and to govern them according to labour market needs (Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini 2011; Cheliotis 2016; Dimitriadi 2018).

The case of Greece is paradigmatic in this sense. According to Cheliotis (2016:2) the first migratory inflows in Greece enabled the fulfilment of “domestic market needs and dominant political interests”, reproducing the economy/security dilemma at national scale. The first law on migration issues was promulgated in 1991, in the

context of the dissolution of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and the subsequent “third wave” of migration into Europe, which poured thousands of migrants into southern and central European countries alike. For some scholars, migration influxes caught the Greek government and the public opinion utterly unprepared, both politically and culturally (Triandafyllidou 2009; Mavrikos-Adamou 2017).

The considerable amount of migrant arrivals from the northern border enlarged the ranks of exploitable labour force and its parallel reserve army, further expanding the already largest informal sector in Europe and paving the way for the introduction of neoliberal reforms to restrict labour rights and welfare policies (Maroukis, Iglicka, and Gmaj 2011; Cheliotis 2016). Incoming migration flows thus constituted a rich breeding-ground for both politico-institutional forces, determined to incorporate the country into the global economy and the growing European monetary system (Maroukis, Iglicka, and Gmaj 2011), and economic elites, which could strongly benefit from a large supply of cheap and highly submissive labour force in several crucial economic sectors (Lyberaki 2008; Cheliotis 2016; Maroukis 2016).

In the wake of the deepening of the European common market and the implementation of Schengen <sup>94</sup> and Dublin Conventions, law 1975/1991 was introduced. Considering migration as a matter of public order and internal security that should be controlled and managed (Antonopoulos 2006), the preamble of the law immediately elucidates its ideological and political framework, by stating that “Suddenly, Greece started to be flooded with aliens, who, entering, staying and working illegally, create enormous social problems for the state, while they inevitably try to solve their own problems by engaging in criminality (drugs, robberies, thefts etc.)” (cited in Dimitriadi 2018:97). In order to solve this alleged security issue, the law aimed “to prevent the entrance of undocumented immigrants and facilitate the expulsion of those already present in Greek territory, ...penalising illegal alien stay in the country” (Triandafyllidou 2009:160).

Within the economy/security framework, the politico-legal establishment has created an assemblage of policies and measures that fostered the legal production of migrant “illegality”, threatening the deportability of undocumented migrants while exploiting and subsuming their living labour into the economic production system (see De Genova 2002, 2004). According to Antonopoulos (2006:137), the law established

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<sup>94</sup> Although at that time Greece had still an observer status (Triandafyllidou 2009).

“a criminalizing apparatus as it created thousands of ‘offenders’ as a result of their unlawful entrance, residence and employment in Greece”. The two regularisation policies implemented at the turn of the century brought to light hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrants already present in the Greek territory<sup>95</sup>, although 300,000 of them were still confined in the illegality (Fakiolas 2003; Karyotis 2012), replenishing the informal sector.

Despite the initial objectives of the law, the Greek state implemented policies and practices to restrict “both forced and voluntary outflow for those already inside Greek borders without papers, thereby serving to maintain the size of the irregular migrant population in the country at consistently high levels” (Cheliotis 2016:5). In this context, the deportability of undocumented migrants supposedly functioned as a deterrent, in order either to prevent them from entering the Greek territory or, if already within it, to ensure their manageability and subjection to the labour market. The implementation of such measures, though, did not refrain incoming migrants to enter and remain in the country irregularly: data estimates suggest the presence of 650,000 to 1,000,000 undocumented migrants before the 1998 regularisation procedure (Fakiolas 2003; Karyotis 2012).

The dynamic interplay between inclusion and exclusion alternates practices of regularisation and emersion from illegality with arrests and deportations of irregular migrants, materialising the “border spectacle” (De Genova 2013b) along the country’s external boundaries and in the streets. Between 1991 and 1995, more than one million foreigners were expelled from the country, 96% of which were of Albanian origin (Triandafyllidou 2009). In the following three and half years, other 737,000 undocumented migrants were deported, bringing the total estimation of expelled migrants to 1,820,000, the vast majority of whom were Albanians (Antonopoulos and Winterdyk 2006). Apart from the enforcement of border apprehensions and deportations, the HP carried out “sweep operations” in the streets and in public places, with the aim of hunting down irregular migrants and sending them to their countries of origin, often without giving migrants the possibility to appeal (Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini 2011; Karyotis 2012).

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<sup>95</sup> Kasimis (2012) noted that “In 1986, there were a total of about 90,000 immigrants in the country, one-third of whom were from Europe. In 1991, the number of registered ‘foreigners’ (as they are officially referred to in Greece) had grown to 167,000 out of a total population of 10,259,900. ... As a result [of the collapse of the Soviet Union], the country received the highest percentage of immigrants in relation to its labor force in the 1990s, despite being one of the less-developed nations in Europe at that time. By 2001, Greece had an immigrant population of just over 762,000”.

Whereas the first regularisation programme provided a permanent residency for 212,000 migrants, several other hundreds of thousands were still excluded from legal, social or economic benefits (Fakiolas 2003; Glytos 2005). Given the complicated bureaucratic procedures and the delays in their implementation, the regularisation policies actually constituted an obstacle for the emersion of migrants from illegality, thus “reproducing their vulnerability to exploitation in the labour market” (Cheliotis 2016:7). The necessary conditions to obtain a white (limited duration permit) and subsequently a green paper (permanent residence permit) were often unattainable or prohibitive, discouraging migrants’ participation in the second round of regularisation and prompting many of them to remain, wittingly or not, in illegality (Glytos 2005; Triandafyllidou 2009). Besides, Greek employers were generally unwilling to regularise their workers’ positions, taking advantage of the general conditions of the labour market to have cheap workforce at their disposal (Antonopoulos 2006). As a result, the participation of migrant population in the official economy was sporadic and hindered by bureaucratic and social factors, while the Greek informal sector remained one of the largest in Europe, “conservatively estimated at 30-35 per cent of the GDP” (Baldwin-Edwards and Safilios-Rothsch 1999).

In the framework of a major cooperation for the creation of an area of security, freedom, and justice at European level, a new disposition was promulgated with the intention of regulating more efficiently migration movements and improving the civil and social rights of foreign residents. Law 2910/2001 introduced a new regularisation programme for the undocumented migrants who had not applied the first time and for the new immigrants that had arrived in the country since then (Antonopoulos 2006, Triandafyllidou 2009). However, organisational and bureaucratic problems affected the correct functioning of the service. The system lacked human and economic resources to cope with the huge number of applications received, delaying the issue of one-year work and stay permits. The application costs represented another obstacle that prevented migrants from beginning their path towards regularisation (Levinson 2005; Triandafyllidou 2009). As a result, “A very large number of migrants preferred to remain in a situation of ‘illegality’, and live and work in the country without the necessary documents, rather than follow the arrangements of Law 2910/2001” (Antonopoulos 2006:140).

If irregular migrants in the Greek territory strived to have their position regularised, the legal entry of potential newcomers became almost impossible. The

official procedure involved the Organisation for the Employment of Labour Force, which established the number of workers needed for particular sectors; the local prefectures, responsible to compile a list of employers willing to hire a foreign worker; and the Greek consular authorities, which conversely were in charge of collecting the requests from foreign workers wanting to go and work in Greece (Triandafyllidou 2009). Not only were processing times so long and gruelling to discourage migrant workers from applying, the requirements were also so demanding that migrants coming from countries where they risked being persecuted might have faced several problems in obtaining the legal documents to work and live abroad (Antonopoulos 2006). Despite the (few) positive dispositions of the law that aligned Greece to certain human rights standards established at European level<sup>96</sup>, the political-economic framework in which the law operates remained intact, restricting the possibilities of regular access to, or presence in, the Greek territory, while feeding both the flows and stock of irregular migration (Antonopoulos 2006; Düvell 2011; Cheliotis 2016).

Since the turn of the century, the Greek legal framework has advanced further steps towards the communitarisation of migration and asylum issues for the establishment of a European area of freedom, security, and justice. Yet, compliance to, and adaptation of, supra-national regulations had restrictive and short-sighted consequences in the Greek scenario (Mavrodi 2005). New dispositions were promulgated in the 2000s, reflecting the growing governmental attentiveness to the question of immigration and its apparent commitment to extend certain rights to regular migrants (Triandafyllidou 2009). However, the implementation of more liberal policies coalesced with restrictive measures on regular and irregular migration alike and with detrimental procedures to regulate asylum issues, *de facto* curbing the possibilities of obtaining international protection in the country.

After the 2001 regularisation programme, another law concerning migration issues was promulgated in 2005 and modified two years later. Law 3386/2005 incorporated the European directives on family reunification (2003/86/EC) and long-term resident immigrants (2003/109/EC) into the Greek legislation, while regulating “matters of entry, stay and social integration of third country nationals in Greece” (Triandafyllidou and Marouf 2009:38). Special permits were introduced – with

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<sup>96</sup> Noteworthy are the right to have an interpreter during detention; the possibility to obtain a double citizenship; the convergence of deportation procedures to international standards; and the right for migrant children to a nine-year education process.

different application fees according to their duration and type – for financial and independent investment activities and for different categories of people, from sportsmen to intellectuals, students and tour guides, legitimising a selective inclusion of incoming migrants along the lines of class and power (Mezzadra and Neilson 2012, 2013; Cheliotis 2016).

The law also launched another regularisation program, including applications for family reunifications and for long-term residency, which summoned 150,000 new demands (Kasimis 2012). The requirements for the regularisation were simplified, alleviating the conditions required to assess the candidates' knowledge of Greek language, history, and culture (Triandafyllidou 2009). Yet, migrants who had lived in Greece until December 31, 2004, were entitled to apply provided that they could demonstrate they had entered the country before that date (Kasimis 2012). At the same time, the law further axed the living conditions of irregular migrants, prohibiting Greek public services organisations and legal entities from offering services to “foreigners who are ‘unable to prove that they have entered and are residing in the country legally’” (Triandafyllidou 2009:173).

Law 3536/2007 mitigated the strict conditions of the previous laws, abolishing the regularisation fees for children aged 14 to 18; giving migrants the opportunity to pay for up to 20 per cent of the 200 days of social insurance contributions required to be eligible for regularisation and permit renewal; and allowing more time for the submission of the necessary documents (Kasimis 2012). However, migration policies remained characterised by a well-turned attempt to shrink the possibilities for entering or staying regularly in the country, while managing the irregular flows so as to absorb part of them into the country's reserve army of labour. As Karyotis argues (2012:414), the radical shift towards the socio-political liberalisation of migrants' rights “was clearly driven by economic interests and needs related to the country's debt crisis”.

With the burst of the crisis, the issue of immigration became further politicised, with the main political parties afraid of losing their consensus over the potential concession of political and socio-economic rights to migrants (Triandafyllidou 2009). As the channels for regular access and permanence into the Greek territory were being regimented and restrained, the only possibility to enter the country was through irregular means. Irregular migration, purposefully produced through restrictive migration policies, has consequently maintained sustained high levels throughout the 2000s, encompassing the (arbitrarily defined) voluntary and forced migratory flows.

Given the peculiar geopolitical position of Greece, the implementation of border controls proved to be extremely difficult and expensive (Katsiaticas 2014). Apart from the Greek-Bulgarian land border<sup>97</sup> and the maritime connections with Italy, still subject to particular security controls, all the other country's borders are also external borders of the EU<sup>98</sup>, making Greece an aspired yet critical geopolitical destination. The north-western border with Albania and the eastern land and sea borders with Turkey have represented a security concern for both European and Greek authorities, which have put in practice conjoint operations to deter what they classified as the main threat, i.e. irregular immigration.

During the 1990s and for most part of the 2000s apprehensions and expulsions of undocumented migrants concerned mainly Albanians. From the hundreds of thousands of Albanians seized yearly during the 1990s<sup>99</sup>, either at the border or in the streets, the total number of apprehensions (regarding both illegal entry and residence) has significantly dropped since 2008, reaching an all-time low level in 2012 and stabilising since then (see Table 6). According to Gregou (2014), the reason of such decrease should be comprehended in the crisis of the construction sector related to the economic crisis, which pushed many Albanians either back to their country or towards other destinations, and in the liberalisation of visas regime, which allowed Albanian citizens to travel within the EU.

<b>Apprehended irregular migrants for illegal entry or residence, by selected nationality, from 2006 to 2015</b>										
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Albania</b>	57466	66818	72454	63563	50175	11733	10602	15389	16751	16910
<b>Afghanistan</b>	5260	11611	25577	17828	28299	28528	16584	6412	12901	213267
<b>Bangladesh</b>	1824	721	1655	1443	3264	5416	7863	1524	1164	4511
<b>Iraq</b>	8157	12549	15940	7662	4968	2863	2212	700	1023	91769
<b>Morocco</b>	182	161	143	222	1645	3405	2207	442	264	7818
<b>Pakistan</b>	3350	2834	5512	4854	8830	19975	11136	3982	3621	27261
<b>Palestine</b>	2847	5135	4593	10763	7561	2065	1718	469	622	6350
<b>Somalia</b>	2618	3656	6713	7710	6525	2238	1765	1004	1876	4583
<b>Syria</b>	299	234	451	440	851	1522	7927	8517	32520	499495
<b>Sudan</b>	268	269	285	254	505	404	295	114	192	422
<b>Total</b>	<b>95239</b>	<b>112364</b>	<b>146337</b>	<b>126145</b>	<b>132524</b>	<b>99368</b>	<b>76878</b>	<b>43002</b>	<b>77163</b>	<b>911471</b>

**Table 6: Apprehensions of irregular migrants for illegal entry or residence, 2006-2015.**

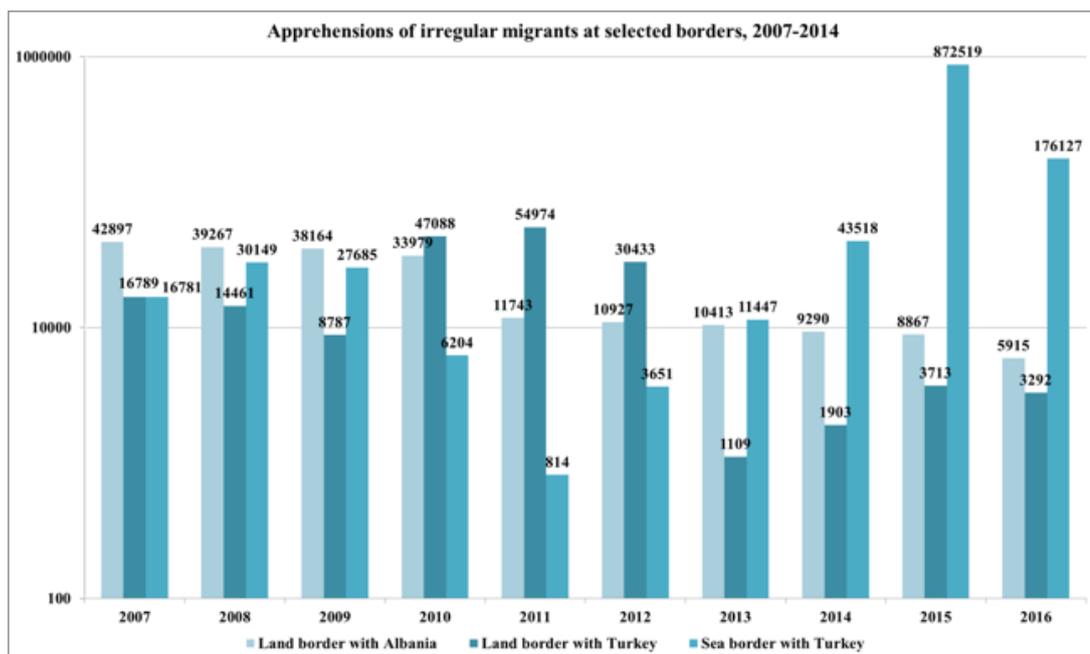
Source: HP.

<sup>97</sup> Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, but its entrance in the Schengen Area has been delayed due to the country's alleged inability to protect its borders. Therefore, border controls are still in place between the Greek-Bulgarian border.

<sup>98</sup> Excluding the Greek-Bulgarian border, stretching for 475 km, the remaining land borders amount to about 700 km. Moreover, Greece has 18,400 km of coastline, with dozens of islands in proximity of the Turkish shores (Dimitriadi 2018).

<sup>99</sup> Several authors report that precise data on regular and irregular migration were difficult to retrieve, as national authorities were reluctant in keeping official records or sharing statistics (Fakiolas 2003; Triandafyllidou and Maroufouf 2009; Kasimis 2012). Even when more reliable data started to be produced, numbers on detection of irregular migrants have not considered irregular entries of potential asylum seekers, undetected crossings, and multiple crossings by the same person (Mitsilegas 2002).

In the same period, the Greek-Turkish border became the main entry point for undocumented migrants, experiencing fluctuating trends and dynamics between the sea and land borders (see Figure 28). Between 2007 and 2009, apprehensions at the sea border between the two countries almost doubled; in contrast, the figures for the land border halved. It should be noted, though, that in 2007 alone, “detections at the Greek sea and land borders with Turkey and the land border with Albania accounted for almost 50% of the EU total” (FRONTEX 2009). In the following triennium (2010-2012), trends reversed: the land border became the most used path to enter Greece, with more than 132,000 irregular migrants detected, while sea crossings plunged to few thousand entries. After 2013, pressures were transferred again towards the sea border, with a fourfold increment over the first year. It is in 2015 that the Greek-Turkish border saw an incredible amount of border crossers: 872,000 people disembarked in the Greek islands of Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Kos, and Rhodes, while about 3,700 were apprehended at the land border.



**Figure 28: Apprehensions of irregular migrants at selected borders, 2007-2016.**  
Source: Elaboration from HP.

The reason of such relatively quick changes of migrants’ routes is attributed to the different measures adopted each time to protect the borders. Until 2009, for example, crossing the Greek-Turkish border via land through the Evros region was extremely dangerous, as the territory was mine-laden (Antonopoulos and Winterdyk 2006; Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini 2011). Therefore, migrants were forced to employ the sea route, although crossing the few miles separating Turkey from the Aegean islands

was not less risky. The de-mining of the Evros region, completed in 2009, might have caused another shift of migration movements towards the land again, even if the conditions of border crossing were still prohibitive: the increasing security checks compelled migrants to cross the river at night times, often with the help of smugglers or facilitators transporting them by car or truck (Antonopoulos and Winterdyk 2006). The subsequent construction of a barbed wire fence transferred the migratory pressure to the Greek islands or to the Bulgarian land border (Gregou 2014).

In addition to increasing border surveillance operated by European and national authorities, detections and expulsions of irregular migrants have occurred with the systematic employment of “sweep operations”. With the burst of the economic crisis and the destruction of thousands of jobs in the agricultural and construction sectors (Triandafyllidou and Mantanika 2016), such practices led to the capillary proliferation of mechanisms of control and the widespread perception of migrants as either redundant workforces to be expelled or threats to social security (Yousef 2013; Cheliotis 2016; Dimitriadi 2018). The implementation of “sweep operations” intermingled with a reawakening, particularly palpable in times of crisis, of ethno-nationalist sentiments and behaviours that redrew the traditional boundaries of hospitality, now masking a supposedly moral and ethnic superiority of the host (Paul 2015; Rozakou 2012, 2018).

In August 2012, Greek authorities launched the operation “Xenios Zeus”<sup>100</sup>, with the aim of detecting, identifying, and eventually repatriating migrants irregularly residing in the country. In the first four months, the action led to the arrest of almost 65,000 migrants, only 4100 of whom were in an irregular situation (FIDH, Migreurop, and EMHRN 2014). The main criterion adopted during the stop-and-search procedures was essentially the discernibility of the racial traits of the subjects, which became – in a violent stereotypical manner – suspects (Dimitriadi 2018; Rozakou 2018; see also Bowling and Phillips 2007; Bowling and Weber 2011). The visibility of – and impossibility to conceal – particular ethnic or racial features became the pretext for the identification and interrogation of thousands of migrants, conveying bordering practices onto their bodies by virtue of a perverse equation that associates criminality with skin colour.

The implementation of “sweep operations” could not have been feasible without a simultaneous increase of detention and deportation measures, which encourage the

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<sup>100</sup> Ironically named after the patron saint of hospitality and welcoming (MEDU 2013).

“reversed mobility” of migrants (Dimitriadi 2018:106), i.e. their forced return to their countries of origin or transit with the collaboration of supposedly technical agencies such as the IOM (Andrijasevic 2010; Andrijasevic and Walters 2010; Dimitriadi 2018). Detention and deportation practices do not operate in a void, but are part and parcel of the European migration management complex aiming at governing the mobilities of migrants outside, within, and across European borders (De Genova and Peutz 2010; Mountz et al. 2013; Dimitriadi 2018).

In conjunction with the launch of Xenios Zeus, “five new ‘pre-removal’ centres have been established, with a total combined capacity of 5,000, and the maximum duration of detention permitted has been prolonged to up to 18 months” (Pro Asyl 2013a). The operational costs amounted to €4 million per month over the first year, funded by the European External Borders Fund (FIDH, Migreurop, and EMHRN 2014). In July 2014, the operation, after having been harshly criticised by human rights groups for arbitrary detention, ethnic profiling, and summary removal of migrants, “was integrated into the standard operating procedures of the Greek Police and renamed Operation Theseus” (Katsiaficas 2014:8).

With the incorporation of such practices into the everyday activities of the HP, the border has become less publicly visible but more thoroughly widespread across the Greek territory, redrawing the geographies of mobility and in/exclusion. The extension of the procedures of detection, detention, and deportation across society contributed not only to instil a pervasive sense of fear and dismay among migrants, but also, I argue, to achieve a better management and containment of their mobilities. In the port area of Patras, security controls and personal checks on the bodies of migrants alternate with practices of collective clearance and removal, diverting or delaying their attempts to access the ferryboats.

In a conversation with the Deputy Commander of the Immigration Department of the central police station of Patras, the officer explained that, in relation to immigration issues, the police intervene “wherever the law permits us to do so”<sup>101</sup>. Apart from performing controls on outgoing travellers to debunk potential smuggling networks<sup>102</sup>, the police carry out stop-and-search operations both in the streets and inside the abandoned factories in order to detect and seize undocumented migrants.

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<sup>101</sup> Semi-structured interview, 08/07/2015.

<sup>102</sup> Although the Commander of the Immigration Department later specified that, people arrested inside the port area with fake documents are responsibility of the HCG (semi-structured interview with HP Commander, 08/07/2015).

However, as the officers themselves admitted, the situation seems to have changed: whereas in the past the majority of migrants were either without documents or with a one-month paper<sup>103</sup>, at the time of fieldwork most of migrants had asked for, or had already obtained, asylum, so it was rare to spot undocumented migrants<sup>104</sup>. Divergences in the legal status of migrants might be due to the social networks they create, and to the different tactics employed. As the Commander specified, Sudanese migrants usually have their asylum cards or have already obtained asylum, while Afghan migrants have either applied for asylum or been living in the country irregularly.

Although the officers endeavoured to disclose the humanitarian aspect of migration issues and the human disposition of their operations, there emerges the violent character of the European law, with its contradictory dispositions that disregard Greece and yet must be obeyed:

“How many are they [the immigrants, as he called them]? They are from everywhere: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Northern Africa, Congo, and so on. They are all trying to go to Europe, and with good reasons: to live their lives. Not all of them are bad people, or come here with bad reasons.... How can you deal with that? What would you do? It is a legal problem, but also a human problem. Unfortunately, I can't see how it will be solved. It is not a national problem, but a European one. As for the police, we have a very clear role: we have to apply the law. But we are not only policemen: we are citizens”<sup>105</sup>.

Despite their supposedly human inclination (see Pallister-Wilkins 2015), stop-and-search operations, exacerbated by ethnic or racial connotations, do create a constant state of fright among migrants (Dimitriadi 2018; Rozakou 2018). A Sudanese asylum seeker expressed his concern to walk freely along the street even with his documents in order, frightened by the idea of being targeted and arrested by the police for its blackness<sup>106</sup>. Different ethnic or racial characteristics acquire more evidence inside the port fences: whereas local citizens have re-appropriated the new port spaces through recreational activities, black people have become an easy target that can risk seizure at any time. A Sudanese refugee confessed that, once he had received his passport, he would have travelled to France by plane, as going through the port even

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<sup>103</sup> The one-month paper, informally called “chartia”, is usually released soon after the irregular entry into the country. It is valid for one month, giving migrants the possibility to ask for asylum or to abandon the country before its expiry. It was (and still is) not uncommon for migrants to overstay this document and fall into illegality, rather than asking for asylum and being stuck in Greece.

<sup>104</sup> Semi-structured interview with HP Commander, 08/07/2015.

<sup>105</sup> See note 101.

<sup>106</sup> Informal conversation with B., Sudan, 06/06/2015.

with legal documents could have jeopardised his plans: “The police don’t care, if they see a black man entering the port they automatically send him back”<sup>107</sup>. During an informal conversation with three migrants, one of them ironically suggested that they should go inside the port area and pretend to jog or run as white people do, so that they can disguise themselves and avoid being caught by the police<sup>108</sup>. After all, Khosravi reminds us (2008:330), “Border crossing is... a matter of performance”.

In her reconstruction of the 2011 Tunisian uprisings, Gandolfi (2013) argues that taking control of the streets becomes a fundamental step to spatially reunite the variegated multitude of rebels and realise the revolution. The mental and physical re-appropriation of the streets, alleys, shortcuts, and hideouts that surround the occupied factories allows migrants to escape police intrusions or pursuits. When “sweep operations” unexpectedly penetrate inside the migrant settlements, staying concealed within the premises or dashing off quickly through back exits might represent a necessary option to avoid capture. In a conversation with a Sudanese migrant, the police had only come once in the factory for the previous 34 days he had spent in Patras. Being undocumented, “when they [the police] came, I immediately went upstairs where they usually do not enter”<sup>109</sup>.

Apart from the sporadic yet intimidating stop-and-search operations, it is the daily cat-and-mouse chase between police hunters and migrant preys that represents the most iconic and reiterated scene in the port of Patras (see Andersson 2014b). “It is like the cartoon, Tom and Jerry”<sup>110</sup>, an Afghan migrant once told me, with the police-cat trying to run after the migrant-mice. Every afternoon, during busy boarding times, the whole security apparatus comes into action, with the joint operations performed by the HP, OLPa private security, and the HCG in order to prevent the elusive migrants from reaching the embarking area. For the duration of this unruly contest, the different public and private forces constantly patrol both the national road and the internal street of the port area, keeping migrants at distance and yelling at them some words they immediately become familiar with: “Φύγε, μάλάκα!” (Piss off, asshole!).

The everyday chasing activities delineate “the contested movement across space and the spatial restructuring of migration governance as it struggles to catch up with these movements” (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015:66). Taking refuge inside the factories or

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<sup>107</sup> Informal conversation with A. M., Sudan, 01/05/2015.

<sup>108</sup> Informal conversation with T., Saudi Arabia, M. and an anonymous migrant, Sudan, 29/03/2015.

<sup>109</sup> Informal conversation with A., Sudan, 25/05/2015.

<sup>110</sup> Informal conversation with H., Afghanistan, 01/08/2015.

reaching the adjacent railway line, where police cars cannot go, means avoiding document checks and potential arrest. That happened, for instance, during a pursuit I accidentally observed while I was standing in front of the gates of a small church, in a cross street along the coastal road Akti Dimaion. Suddenly, I saw two Afghan migrants entering that narrow street where I was, chased by a police car. When they saw the police turning towards their direction, they started to run, passing in front of me. Few seconds later, the police car came along, slowed down by the rough road. At the end of the street, interrupted by the railway line that runs across it, the migrants turned left and proceeded along the way, while the police car, unable to continue because of the interruption of the road, had to turn back, therefore missing them<sup>111</sup>.

In the port/border area of Patras, stop-and-search operations continuously alternate with hide-and-peek pursuits, complicating the possibilities for migrants to cross the border. As Andreas puts it (2009:111), “the old game between border enforcers and clandestine border crossers persists, but the game strategy of the enforcers has changed to maximize the appearance of control”, thus projecting an image of insurmountable border apparatus. The aim of such game is less to arrest or capture undocumented migrants, than to prevent them from crossing the port fences and reaching the embarkation area, therefore delaying their access to Italy and regulating their mobilities. For migrants, the crossing becomes a question of chance that will eventually occur. “No chance today” – told me a Sudanese migrant when he came back to the factory, taking off his dirty clothes after having attempted to sneak under a lorry. Despite managing to cross the check-ins, he was discovered during the pre-embarkation security controls and pushed away: “Tomorrow it will be better, inshallah”<sup>112</sup> (see Courau 2003).

### *The changing geographies of asylum*

Given its position, at the geopolitical margins of the EU and yet embedded in its institutional and legal mechanisms, Greece has been one of the main entry points for asylum-related flows, especially since the intensification of the conflicts in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and north-eastern Africa. The increasing militarisation of the external borders and the progressive restrictions of the legal channels to access the European space have jeopardised the possibilities to apply for international protection

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<sup>111</sup> Field notes, 17/04/2015.

<sup>112</sup> Informal conversation with a Sudanese migrant, 06/08/2015.

within the EU. Instead, they have produced and expanded a multitude of undocumented migrants, which see Greece as a transit place to reach other European countries often eschewing the asylum procedures. As regular corridors have shrunk, and external borders fortified, migration and asylum inflows have been conflated together, blurring the boundaries between the illegalisation of migrant mobs and the humanitarian regime of asylum (Tazzioli 2016; see also Walters 2012).

The tangles of asylum and its changing mechanisms through time should be analysed, I argue, *vis-à-vis* the overarching context of border reinforcement and mobility regulation across and within the European territory. The intertwining combination of FRONTEX operations and CEAS dispositions has created a protean form of migration governance that simultaneously accepts and rejects migrants, extending the ability of the state to govern more bodies and more spaces (see J. M. Williams 2015). In this respect, the Greek asylum system is part and parcel of the European regime that regulates migrants' access and mobility at supra-national level, reproducing the mechanisms of reception, detention, and deportation of migrants.

The Greek asylum system experienced a breakthrough modification in June 2013, when the new Asylum Service entered into function, with a delay of more than two years from the promulgation of the relative law (Triandafyllidou 2014a; Katsiaficas 2014). The old asylum system was under the control of the HP, responsible for the collection and examination of asylum applications of those migrants who had managed to avoid arrest and deportation at the border. As the lawyer of the HRC in Patras remarked, "the police officers who arrested the migrants... were the same people to whom the migrants had to apply for political asylum"<sup>113</sup>.

Rozakou (2012:563; see also Triandafyllidou 2014a) defines the old asylum system as a "politics of invisibility" towards asylum seekers and refugees", given the pitiful amount of recognition rates, the inadequate reception system, and the numerous delays and violations of rights during the asylum process. In this respect, the European Court of Human Rights repeatedly condemned Greece for the "inhuman and degrading treatment" reserved to asylum seekers, and for the difficulties in accessing the asylum procedure (European Court of Human Rights 2016; see also Skordas and Sitaropoulos 2004; Human Rights Watch 2011, 2014; McDonough and Tsourdi 2012).

Such a system was purposefully conceived to produce and exploit docile subjects who could enrich the ranks of an already voluminous migrant workforce in

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<sup>113</sup> Semi-structured interview, 31/03/2015.

low-skilled economic sectors, reflecting the oscillating requirements of the national labour market (Cheliotis 2016). The minuscule recognition rates (see Table 7) and the long-drawn-out response times did not provide any practicable alternative to those asylum seekers who actually submitted their claims in Greece, turning them into undocumented migrants that were either invited to leave the country or forced to stay in the shadow. Whereas the lengthy waiting times compelled asylum seekers to linger in an interminable bureaucratic limbo for years (see Mountz et al. 2002; Cabot 2012), often resorting to informal labour and housing activities to compensate the absence of social services, the probable exclusion from any form of international protection would immediately plunge them into illegality. For those asylum seekers who refused the registration in Greece and the subsequent entrapment within the perverse mechanisms of the Dublin Convention, the only viable solution was to remain in illegality, until reaching other European countries where to deposit an asylum request.

<b>Number of successful asylum applications compared to the total claims, 2005-2012</b>								
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>Asylum</b>	39	64	140	358	36	95	240	217
<b>Subsidiary protection</b>	0	0	0	17	104	35	165	137
<b>Humanitarian protection</b>	85	129	75	38	26	35	182	273
<b>Total successful applications</b>	124	193	215	413	166	165	587	627
<b>Rejections</b>	4585	10414	20684	22188	14190	3353	9175	11097
<b>Total applications</b>	9050	12267	25113	19884	15928	10273	9311	9577
<b>Recognition rate</b>	1.37%	1.57%	0.86%	2.08%	1.04%	1.61%	6.30%	6.55%

**Table 7: Asylum recognition rates in Greece, 2005-2012.**  
Source: HP.

When it became clear that the Greek labour market could not absorb the “excess” (Garelli and Tazzioli 2016) of undocumented migrants produced by structural fallacies of the old asylum procedure (Maroukis 2012; Triandafyllidou 2014a), an independent Asylum Service was created, co-financed by European and State funds. Following the continuous influences and warnings from the EU, as well as the devastating effects of the economic crisis, Greece has eventually enforced the recast directives of CEAS, adapting its legislation to European common standards and procedures to the benefit of other European partners<sup>114</sup> (Triandafyllidou 2014a, 2014b).

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<sup>114</sup> Throughout the course of the old police system, several European countries suspended the return of asylum seekers to Greece by virtue of the Dublin Regulation. In 2011, the list of countries comprised Belgium, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (Ward 2011). With the implementation of the new system, these countries were relieved from the responsibility of examining the asylum claims that Greece was not able to process.

Law 3907/2011 transferred and implemented the European directives on reception, asylum, and return procedures into the Greek system, establishing the conditions for the creation of “an Asylum Service, a First Reception Service and an Appeals Committee to improve the management of the asylum system” (Katsiaficas 2014:9; see also McDonough and Tsourdi 2012). The implementation of a new asylum system represented a necessary step for both European institutions and the Greek state: whereas the former could finally maintain and impose its mechanisms to a reluctant border state, the latter, trapped in the clutches of a detrimental economic crisis and increasing migratory flows, could receive financial and operational support from the EU and potentially exert political pressures to overcome the whole system from within (see Trauner 2016).

The new asylum system inserts itself in the European border and migration regime that governs the mobilities of asylum seekers and refugees, from their apprehension at the border until their reception into, or expulsion from, the European territory. In keeping pace with the European framework, the asylum reform grants more reliability in distinguishing between deserving genuine refugees and mistrusted bogus asylum seekers, redrawing the boundaries of morality and belonging within the EU (see Kobelinsky 2008; Kmak 2015; Yildiz et al. 2016). Logical spatio-temporal protraction of the process of mobility control enforced at and across European external borders, the renovated asylum regime can finally assure the realisation of a “governmental framework for containing, taming, and domesticating some of the excesses of cross-border human mobility” (De Genova, Garelli, and Tazzioli 2018:247-8; see also Tazzioli 2017a).

With the new Asylum Service, everything thus changed and yet remained the same. The officers responsible for the examination of asylum applications are now professionals appointed at national level, operating under the aegis of the Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen (which is also responsible for the HP; see FIDH, Migreurop, and EMHRN 2014). First-instance recognition rates of international protection have generally increased in comparison to the previous system and stabilised since 2015 (although with a significant drop in 2016, see Table 8), while response times have been significantly reduced.

Yet, problems persist, and new barriers have been erected, generating legal and social distinctions among asylum seekers. The introduction of the new Asylum Service produced indeed a two-fold system: whereas older asylum seekers still have

their claims processed by the police, newcomers can rely on a more efficient procedure for the examination of their asylum requests that allow them to have a response to their claims within few months. As of 30 September 2015, first instance cases had been entirely processed, but the backlog of second instance decisions was still quite vast. According to the Asylum Information Database (AIDA), 22,656 cases were still pending, while delays in the renewal of the asylum seekers' cards and difficulties to access to the police facilities could risk exposing them to arbitrary arrest for identification reasons<sup>115</sup>.

Asylum Applications - First instance procedure							
	2013 (Since June 7)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Until February)	Total
Refugee Status	229	1223	3647	2451	9316	1874	<b>18740</b>
Subsidiary Protection	93	487	347	249	1041	258	<b>2475</b>
Negative in substance	1754	4254	4434	6588	12118	2384	<b>31532</b>
Inadmissible decisions				15241	22485	1030	
a) due to the application of the safe third country principle (Border Procedures)				1312	918	102	
b) due to acceptance by another Member State (Dublin Regulation procedures)	261	1453	2019	2070	8319	754	<b>42489</b>
c) due to acceptance by another Member State (Relocation procedures)				11000	12323	0	
d) on subsequent (repeated) applications				775	915	174	
e) due to administrative reasons				84	10	0	
Implicit & Explicit withdrawals	243	1078	2374	2385	6810	1425	<b>14315</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2580</b>	<b>8495</b>	<b>12821</b>	<b>42155</b>	<b>74255</b>	<b>8001</b>	<b>109551</b>
<b>RECOGNITION RATE %</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>47.4</b>	<b>29.1</b>	<b>46.1</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>40.2</b>

**Table 8: Decisions on international protection status with the new Asylum Service; June 2013 – Feb. 2018.**  
Source: Asylum Service ([www.asylo.gov.gr](http://www.asylo.gov.gr)).

Notes: The category “Implicit and explicit withdrawals” includes withdrawals that have not been revoked; the “Recognition rate” considers only decisions in substance (Refugee Status, Subsidiary Protection, Negative in substance).

Moreover, since September 2014 Syrians have benefited from a fast-track examination procedure that gives them an answer within the same day, provided that they carry a valid identity document. Despite the limited capacity of the fast-track procedure, which allowed for only 12 applications per week to be processed in the first two months (UNHCR 2014), different procedures have applied according to the

<sup>115</sup> [http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/procedures/registration-asylum-application#footnote4\\_hq0yxi2](http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/procedures/registration-asylum-application#footnote4_hq0yxi2)

applicant's nationality and to the period in which the asylum application was lodged, engendering temporally differential accesses to the protection system (Tazzioli 2016, 2018). During one of my first visits in the shacks at the crossroad in front of the northern exit of the port, a Sudanese asylum seeker complained about the fact that he had been living in a limbo for five years, waiting for a response to his asylum application that had fallen within the old system, while recently-arrived fellow countrymen could have their claims processed within few months<sup>116</sup>.

The management of the asylum system through neoliberal principles, with persistent dearth of financial and human resources, increasing dependence on external and often underpaid services, and deficiencies in the access procedures, ultimately has had repercussions on the everyday life of asylum seekers, who continuously risk detention and deportation (AIDA 2015a, 2015b). As of September 2015, the Asylum Service could count on almost 200 employees among caseworkers, administrative personnel, and security officers. Still, the system remained "grossly understaffed", as it would have probably needed three or four times that amount of workers<sup>117</sup>. Besides, the caseworkers themselves are often recruited on a temporary basis, not only for the psychological concerns to which they are exposed, but also for the chronic lack of funds. The creation and employment of a "reservoir of experienced people who... will choose, time and again, to come to us and have a sort of contract"<sup>118</sup> represented an economic abatement but might constitute a serious blow for the quality of its services (see Gill 2009).

The cooperation with international and non-governmental organisations for the provision of equipment and the expertise of their own paid staff permit the functioning of general operations but jeopardise the regularity of certain vital procedures. The reliance on the local NGO METAction for the realisation of interviewing and translation services surely overshadowed the old system, where the use of interpreters was not systematic and often incorrect. Yet, the presence of external, often overstretched and low-paid personnel renders the Asylum Service subordinate to the availability and competence of distinct organisations, complicating what Cabot defines "the social aesthetics of eligibility" (Cabot 2013). As the Interim Head of the Training, Quality Insurance, and Documentation Department of the RAO of Attica

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<sup>116</sup> Informal interview with A., Sudan, 15/02/2015.

<sup>117</sup> Semi-structured interview with the Interim Head of the Training, Quality Insurance, and Documentation Department of the Regional Asylum Office (RAO) of Attica, Athens, 16/09/2015.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

admitted,

“the NGO... is not an interpreter factory [laughing].... That [working for the Asylum Service] is a big part of their job... but they have other things to do, and they cannot and do not find very often interpreters in sufficient numbers in the languages that we perhaps need”<sup>119</sup>.

The dependence on, and sometimes the delays of, European funding often result in the impossibility of duly paying for these external services, and in the temporary limitation of interviewing and translation provisions. In turn, the lack of interpreters or caseworkers reduces the availability of translatable languages<sup>120</sup>, and thus the chances for many asylum seekers to be registered and interviewed. Consequently, hundreds of people who gather every morning in the premises of the Asylum Service do not have access to the system and are compelled to return several times before they could eventually lodge their requests. As the UNHCR denounced, many asylum seekers “are unable to have their application registered within a given day [and some of them] presented themselves up to 30 times before they managed to register their asylum application” (UNHCR 2014).

“Asylum must not be a lottery”, remarks the EC brochure on CEAS (European Commission and Directorate-General for Home Affairs 2014). The conversations and interviews with migrants in Patras, however, tell a different story. The first lottery is the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea itself, the deadliest border of all, with 3,770 deaths in 2015<sup>121</sup>. Then, despite the CEAS attempts to harmonise national legislations, the asylum lottery carries on within the EU, with migrants eschewing the dispositions of the Dublin and EURODAC Regulations, willing to reach those countries where they may find better living conditions. The lottery system was also literally employed for the selection of the asylum seekers outside the premises of the RAO in Attica. Although the system was dismissed after little time, being recognised as “unjust and unsuccessful”<sup>122</sup>, a random selection of potential asylum seekers still applies: candidates are still chosen by chance, depending on their perseverance in showing up every day in front of the premises, or by necessity, according to the languages available for translation on any given day<sup>123</sup> (see also ECRE 2014).

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Corresponding to the languages spoken by the Asylum Service officers: English, French, or Greek (which is very unlikely for asylum seekers to master fluently).

<sup>121</sup> IOM Missing Migrants Project, available at: <http://missingmigrants.iom.int>.

<sup>122</sup> See note 117.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

In some cases, the inherent problems of the Asylum Service have repercussions on migrants' decision to apply for asylum, engendering further stress on their economic conditions. Despite a small donation received from his family, an Afghan migrant in Patras confessed that he did not apply for asylum "Because you have to queue for three or four days, and I didn't have money to sleep or eat there [in Athens]"<sup>124</sup>. Queues, Fuller posits (Fuller 2007:3), "are a form of control [which] structure relations between one and the many". Similarly, another Afghan migrant recalled the words that officers used to yell at the hundreds of people who could not be admitted in Katechaki – as migrants generally call the RAO of Attica, located in the Athenian neighbourhood of the same name – due to the aforementioned problems, "Αύριο! Αύριο!" (Tomorrow! Tomorrow!)<sup>125</sup>. To solve the overcrowding of the RAO of Attica, a Sudanese asylum seeker adopted another tactic:

I did not apply for asylum in Athens, because at that time it was too difficult to apply: you could find a great number of people, maybe 600 people, that stood there, every morning, to wait for the staff of the Asylum Office to come out and choose the people. They used to choose ten or maybe twenty people every day and tell all the others to come back the next day. The work was going really slow. If you have only a few days, because your paper is expiring soon, this is too difficult. So, lot of people get away to apply for asylum, in order to avoid getting caught by the police when their documents expire. The situation in Athens goes on like this. So, a friend of mine told me that in the office for asylum in Mytilene [Lesvos] didn't have many applicants at that time; so, I travelled to Mytilene to apply for asylum there. I waited for two weeks after the application: they made me an interview, asked for my information, took my fingerprints, and gave me an identity card. After another two weeks, I had the results of my interview. In total, after one month and a half, I had asylum<sup>126</sup>.

Even if one has already obtained protection in the country, the renewal of the asylum card and the wait for the release of the travel documents represent an economic and temporal burden, putting migrants' life on a constant state of hold (Jeffrey 2008; Griffiths 2014). According to a Sudanese asylum seeker, whose demand fell into the old system, the asylum procedure is a frustrating process, because "they always tell you to wait for some time, but when the time comes nothing is ready, they only renew your chartia<sup>127</sup> for other four months but nothing else happens, so you have to come back after some other time, spending more money for the travel"<sup>128</sup>. Over the course

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<sup>124</sup> Semi-structured interview with A. H., Afghanistan, 26/06/2015.

<sup>125</sup> Informal conversation with H., Afghanistan, 25/07/2015.

<sup>126</sup> Semi-structured interview with A. M., Sudan, 09/05/2015.

<sup>127</sup> See note 103.

<sup>128</sup> Informal conversation with a Sudanese migrant, 18/07/2015.

of multiple conversations with a Yemenite refugee waiting for the travel documents to reach his family in the UK, the informant explained to me the process to claim and obtain a passport from the Greek authorities: not only did the document release cost €85, but a preliminary check of the applicant's eligibility was also required. In his words, this process could take up to two months, but delays in receiving an answer might cause preoccupation and anxiety, as in his case<sup>129</sup>.

Aware of the multiple financial and geopolitical crises traversing the country, some migrants adopted invisibility and illegality as practices of “spatial disobedience” (Tazzioli 2017a) to eschew the governmental mechanisms of containment and control of mobilities superimposing at national and European level (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Mezzadra 2011b). During the midsummer of 2015, with the borders through the Balkans partially opened, an Afghan migrant confessed that, although he refused to claim asylum in Greece, he decided to come to Patras and attempt to cross the Adriatic Sea without leaving traces, instead of reaching Hungary and being potentially fingerprinted (and therefore returned) there<sup>130</sup>. Remaining in the invisibility of the abandoned factories constitutes an extremely risky practice for migrants, as it can entail detention and potential expulsion from the country. When I asked an undocumented migrant what could have occurred if the police had caught him, “Only God knows”, he replied, turning his look towards the sky<sup>131</sup>.

However dangerous, such tactics enable migrants to elude the multifaceted assemblage of apparatuses of control and surveillance, border security mechanisms, and multi-scalar policies for the regulation of migrant mobilities that constitutes the European territorial strategy of migration management (Garelli and Tazzioli 2016). The intertwining and inextricable connections between reception, circulation and expulsion of asylum seekers is mirrored in the geographical location of RAOs and Asylum Units (AUs), which corresponds to, and often complement, the “enforcement archipelago” of detention and expulsion centres (Mountz 2011; see Figure 29). The peculiar disposition of reception and detention centres reflects not only the confusion and conflation of asylum and irregular migration issues (Huysmans 2000), but also the logistical management of asylum seekers within the Greek and European territory.

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<sup>129</sup> Informal conversation and interview with A., Yemen, 05/06/2015 and 20/07/2015, respectively.

<sup>130</sup> Informal conversation, 27/07/015.

<sup>131</sup> Informal interview with A., Afghanistan, 14/07/015. His tactic actually worked, and the person lives now in Switzerland.



Figure 29: Location of RAOs in Greece.

Source: <http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Updated-map-Asylum-Service-02.2018.pdf>

Within this framework, the RAO of Attica in Athens has become pivotal for the logistical management of migrant mobilities: unlike other smaller peripheral offices, the RAO of Attica is Greece’s asylum nerve centre, supposedly capable of coping with more asylum claims. In the first six months of operation in 2013, only five centres were operative, with the RAO of Attica counting for 91% of the workload. The other centres, despite being located at the border – with the exception of the pre-removal detention centre of Amygdaleza, in Athens – could not cover the demand, for lack of either resources or expertise. Therefore, after having crossed the Greek-Turkish border, migrants are usually identified, given a one-month non-renewable document, and diverted to Athens for the potential submission of their asylum claims. With the gradual opening of new AUs, the asylum system has become more decentralised, and

the relative importance of the RAO of Attica has diminished, although still counting for 15% of the total claims presented in 2017 (without considering Piraeus, Alimos and Amygdaleza, located in the periphery of the Greek capital, which dealt with another 15% of claims, see Table 9).

<b>Asylum Applications - Region of registration</b>							
	<b>2013 (Since June 7)</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018 (Until February)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Attica	4398	6357	7830	14141	8839	1269	<b>42834</b>
Thessaloniki	0	412	1191	11411	7626	1125	<b>21765</b>
Lesvos	30	209	692	5093	11952	2844	<b>20820</b>
Chios	0	0	0	3395	6513	299	<b>10207</b>
Thrace	166	900	829	4459	2040	297	<b>8691</b>
Samos	0	0	0	2433	5116	1048	<b>8597</b>
Piraeus	0	0	0	2473	3977	201	<b>6651</b>
Alimos	0	0	0	3141	3258	161	<b>6560</b>
Amygdaleza	98	606	588	451	1543	296	<b>3582</b>
Rhodes	0	454	803	931	699	102	<b>2989</b>
Kos	0	0	0	686	1698	293	<b>2677</b>
Fylakio	122	399	412	448	955	229	<b>2565</b>
Leros	0	0	0	871	1389	52	<b>2312</b>
Xanthi	0	40	578	386	689	152	<b>1845</b>
Patra	0	54	265	414	987	109	<b>1829</b>
Korinthos	0	0	0	324	1065	228	<b>1617</b>
Heraklion	0	0	0	4	315	110	<b>429</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4814</b>	<b>9431</b>	<b>13188</b>	<b>51061</b>	<b>58661</b>	<b>8815</b>	<b>145970</b>

**Table 9: Number of asylum claims submitted with the new Asylum Service by region of registration; June 2013 – Feb. 2018.**

Source: Elaboration from [asylo.gov.gr](http://asylo.gov.gr)

As some argue (Garelli and Tazzioli 2016; Tazzioli 2017a) the circular mobility of migrants within the European space facilitates their manageability, enables their potential employability and exploitability in the informal sector, and expedites their detention or expulsion from the country as liability for non-compliance to the European asylum system. Yet, the refusal to apply for asylum, and thus to be fingerprinted in Greece, represents not merely a stratagem to avoid the frustrating asylum procedure, but rather a political demand of freedom of movement and choice within the European space (see De Genova, Garelli, and Tazzioli 2018).

In Athens, Greece's most important urban centre in terms of social and economic opportunities, migrants can continue their journey towards the northern border via North Macedonia, or find some opportunities in the informal sector. For most of the

migrants I met, Athens represented a necessary layover on their way to Patras, where they could rejoin their friends or fellow countrypersons and get informed about the possibilities to remain in or leave the country. Asylum is amongst the alternatives being offered: migrants have to lodge their application by the deadline, within one month from their initial registration at the border; otherwise, they either leave the country autonomously or they fall into illegality, risking the arrest for up to eighteen months (then reduced to six).

According to some authors (Katsiaficas 2014; Triandafyllidou 2014a, 2014b), the creation of the new Asylum Service constitutes an important breakthrough in the development of the Greek asylum system, generally ameliorating the conditions of asylum reception and aligning it with European standards. The lack of economic resources and the subsequent shortage of personnel and equipment nonetheless generate problems of accessibility to, and reliability of, the whole system, creating further temporal barriers for the spatio-potential inclusion of asylum seekers within the European space.

Besides the advantages and problems on the ground, any evaluative consideration of the Asylum Service should proceed hand in hand with an overarching critique of the European border and migration regime that erects and disseminates barriers for the transnational mobility of certain categories of people, filtering their access into, circulation within, and expulsion from the European territory. The specificity of the port/border area of Patras requires, therefore, an in-depth examination not only of migration and asylum policies, but also of the particular role of logistics in regulating the mobilities of capital, commodities, and people, generating connections and restrictions, demolishing and erecting barriers.

The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of ports as key nodes that connect production and consumption places, allowing the mobility of certain goods and people, while reproducing the dynamics of circulation and control of logistical operations. As Heyman notices (2009:46; see also Cowen 2010), “Ports exemplify... the close relationship of migration and globalization, and the political contradictions that follow between the forces of openness and restrictions”. Given the particular configuration of Patras as a simultaneous transit point for both licit commodities and people and illicit migrants, the dispositions on migration and asylum, with their corollary of detention and deportation, intertwine and overlap with the specific regulations that govern the logistics and security mechanisms in ports.

### 5.3 The port of Patras as a border space

As expounded in previous chapter, it is within the logistics framework that it becomes possible to assess the – apparently conflicting – relationship between market and security imperatives within the current phase of capitalism. Some strands within border studies have already started to examine borders by looking at logistics, either shedding light on the “logistical reorientation of the border regime through the establishment of ‘hotspots’ and corridors” for a better management of migration movements (Mezzadra 2016:10; see also Garelli and Tazzioli 2016; Tazzioli 2017a), or as a point of departure for an overarching critique of capital and capitalism (Mezzadra and Neilson 2015, 2017). However, the analysis of the logistical interconnections between security and market logics in border studies remains deeply under-investigated.

This section will attempt precisely to fill this gap, looking at how multi-scalar security mechanisms have been operating to control and regulate licit flows while hindering or deterring unwanted ones, facilitating the expansion and deepening of the European common market. It will take into consideration a global regulation that has been fundamental for the expansion and concurrent protection of the European market and its ports of entry: the ISPS Code. The analysis of the ISPS Code implementation in the port/border area of Patras, it is argued, will demonstrate that border securitisation is not a totalising and all-encompassing process, but rather an adaptive mechanism that, within the framework of capitalist development, allows simultaneously for inclusion and exclusion, openness and closure, circulation and restriction, mobility and immobility.

The ISPS Code hastily emerged as “a result of heightened security threat perception after September 2001”, and was thus imbued with a pervasive securitarian rhetoric (Metaparti 2010:723). Although being initially “crafted at the direct behest of the United States” (Cowen 2010:606) the Code was later adopted internationally: in 2004, the European Parliament and Council Regulation 725/2004 introduced it in the EU without significant changes. In the attempt to advance a standardised regulatory framework at global level (Cowen 2014; see also Easterling 2014), the Code establishes generic measures and practices for the security of shipping and port facilities. At broader level, it determines the procedures to be put in place in ordinary and extraordinary scenarios, defines the needs to make inspections and control access to the port facility, and forbids the transportation of substances or the fulfilment of

behaviours that may endanger maritime security.

The process of border securitisation and the management of border crossings cannot be merely achieved on paper, but through “the everyday practices of the plurality of power-brokers involved in the securing of borders” at multiple levels (Côté-Boucher, Infantino, and Salter 2014:195). For this reason, the Code ratifies the proactive “cooperation between Contracting Governments, Government agencies, local administrations and the shipping and port industries to detect security threats and take preventive measures against security incidents” (Part A, art. 1.2.1), constructing a nested network of interrelations that span from the national government to the local authorities.

Just like in FRONTEX interventions (see Neal 2009), detection and prevention measures are crucial to guarantee security in port facilities and avoid the materialisation of threats before they could actually jeopardise port operations (see Willis and Ortiz 2004; Willis et al. 2010). As Boyne argues (Boyne 2000:299), the traditional panoptical characteristic of monitoring and surveillance apparatuses has been “transcended by the emergent practice of previsualization, the practice not of observing what is going on, but of foresight and prevention”. To achieve such result, the Code advocates for an “efficient collection and exchange of security-related information” (Part A, art. 1.2.3). Information sharing among the different border agents represents indeed another important instrument to ensure the appropriate implementation of security measures and dispositions. Just as border controls regulate the variegated flows of capital, commodities and people, so the collection, repetition, and circulation of information among border agents at multiple levels can sanction or prevent the mobility of certain people through space and time (Sparke 2006; Côté-Boucher 2008).

The participation of several multi-scalar agents in the process of bordering is certainly not a new phenomenon: border scholars from different perspectives have written extensively on this (see Lahav and Guiraudon 2000; Chalfin 2004; Amoore 2006; Perkins and Rumford 2013). Despite the genericity of its dispositions, the Code introduces a precise enunciation of the actors involved and a general delineation of their roles and practices, adding a further layer of confrontation and negotiation across them (Neilson 2012; cp. Neilson and Rossiter 2013). In particular, the Code appoints the government to set the applicable security levels, to identify the ports that need to be subject to the security regulations, and to approve the Port Facility Security

Assessment (PFSA), which identifies the assets and infrastructures to secure, the potential threats that might arise and the countermeasures to take in order to reduce the vulnerability of port facilities. Whereas the respective government is in charge of eliminating the sources of those threats that may endanger the security of ships or port facilities, it is nonetheless entitled to each individual port facility to carry out studies assessing the levels of importance and gravity of dangers. In the port of Patras, the first threat is irregular immigration: all security measures put in place are focused to face this issue<sup>132</sup>.

The PFSA, the Code continues, constitutes the basis for the redaction of the Port Facility Security Plan (PFSP), which shall address measures for, *inter alia*, preventing unauthorised people, substances, or goods from accessing the port facility; responding to security threats and breaches of security; interfacing with ship security activities; ensuring the security of information; and guaranteeing the security of cargo. In regular operational conditions, the PFSP should establish, delimit, and monitor restricted areas; identify and restrict certain access points; control the accesses to the port facility through the identity check of all persons (passengers, personnel, and visitors) trying to enter the port facility; undertake searches of persons, personal effects, and vehicles seeking to enter the port facility; and supervise the handling of cargo and ship's stores.

The territorial subdivision of space, Lefebvre (1991) reminds us, guarantees its more efficient control, yet producing a multiplicity of actors that contend for it. Similarly, the port/border area of Patras embodies superimposed multi-scalar regulations, which produce fragmented areas of intervention where different forces operate for the safety and security of logistical flows. As Mezzadra and Neilson note in their analysis of special economic zones and free ports (2013:208), "Rather than being spaces of legal voidness, they are saturated by competing norms and calculations that overlap and sometimes conflict in unpredictable but also negotiable ways". The implementation of the ISPS Code and its intertwining with the land use references have created different areas of jurisdiction inside and outside the port facility where different legislations and procedures apply, generating a constant tension between the global imperatives of logistics and the European mechanisms of security.

If the ISPS Code defines the rules for the security of port operations, it is the urban plan that marks the territorial divisions and the relative authorities that are entitled to operate. The spatial divisions between the port and urban areas created by

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<sup>132</sup> Semi-structured interview with the Port Facility Security Manager (PFSM) of OLPa, 02/07/2015.

the land use references assign different plots to different institutions, often causing disputes between OLPa and the municipality (as seen in previous chapter). In the old port, the borderline between the port zone and the urban area was the external fence. With the entry into force of the ISPS Code in 2004, the only fence surrounding the old port, erected in the 1960s to divide the port zone from the urban area, was added a barbed wire and enriched by surveillance mechanisms<sup>133</sup>. As there was no buffer zone between the urban area and the port facility, crossing the fence would have meant a direct violation of the ISPS Code. In that case, “the role of the regular police [was] important, not that one of the Port Police”<sup>134</sup>.

The clear and visible fences that delimit and cut across the new port produce instead three different areas of jurisdiction in order to prevent and counteract threats, while guaranteeing the security of port operations (see Figure 30). This has nonetheless entailed the “multiplication of sovereign entities and legal systems that at times coordinate and at others conflict” for their supervision and management (Neilson and Rossiter 2013:12). The external fence of the port separates the national road, included in the urban land use, from the port zone, allowing the HP and the private security patrols to repel undesired threats. The barbed-wire fence inside the port area surrounds the port facility, a restricted-access area regulated by the ISPS Code that can be entered only with specific permissions or with a valid embarkation ticket at specific times. In the port facility, the HCG can impose its authority: if migrants are spotted there, the HCG may proceed with their arrest, as their unauthorised presence might constitute a threat for port operations<sup>135</sup>.

Between the two sets of fences is located the entity port, a sort of buffer zone disciplined by EU Directive 65/2005, where the HP and the HCG can conjointly operate for the prevention of threats and the removal of undesired migrants. Whereas in the old port of Patras the entity port coincided with the port facility, reducing the space of intervention of the different police forces, in the new port the subdivision of space provides enough time and space to prevent and react to threats. The entity port falls within the port zone; therefore, the HCG is held responsible for the control of the area. However, being this area accessible to everyone, also the HP and the private security forces may intervene to repel migrants. In the entity port, controls are less strict, yet highly selective and discriminatory: as if they constantly carry the border

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<sup>133</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Milionis, 22/06/2015.

<sup>134</sup> See note 132.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

with them (Khosravi 2008; Rahola 2011), migrants found in the area cannot be arrested but are always intimidated to disperse.



**Figure 30: Territorial divisions in the port/border area of Patras.**  
The red line encloses the ISPS area, while the yellow line (which corresponds to the external fence of the port) divides the urban area from the entity port. The white line is Akti Dimaion, the national road.  
Source: Elaboration from Google Earth.

Whereas the HP usually assist the HCG and the private security forces in repelling migrants from the port area, OLPa is in charge to guarantee the security of the port facility and to implement the dispositions of the ISPS Code. In line with a conception and practice of security increasingly permeated with supposedly technical, standardised, and depoliticised connotations (see Amoore 2006; Cowen 2014), OLPa has the responsibility to identify and address the main threat(s) that could affect port activities, without enforcing legal or policing measures. As the PFSM explained, OLPa is “not police: security does not mean police. Security is a mathematical term: it is what you do to get 90 or 95% of efficiency”<sup>136</sup>.

Just as logistics knowingly calculates the space-time gaps within global supply chains and strives for annihilating them, so the securitisation logics accompanying these operations act with a rational and mathematical intelligence that conceals its violent nature (see Cowen 2007, 2010, 2014). With its increasing importance in logistical operations, security has evolved into a managerial activity that, through the evaluation of data and trends on port incidents and the assessment of the relative levels of performance and failures, defines precise procedures and rules of intervention for the whole security team, in order to reach the highest possible operational efficiency,

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

minimise the flaws, and reduce the emergence and effect of potential threats. This can be achieved through a rational and systematic calculation of everyday practices, a process that Heyman defined as “bureaucratic thought-work” (Heyman 1995). As the PFSM described it:

“We have cameras located all over the area, and patrols, which communicate in real time with the base. ...We have a report of the incidents at the time they happen: number, date, the actual time, a code referring to the person who made the report, a code referring to the nature of the violation or the attempted violation, the number of persons connected to the incident, who handled this case, and which are the steps taken afterwards. So, all these things are recorded real time, and we can have pictures of the performance all along the operation period of the port. So, we can focus on data and on tendencies: what is happening today that did not happen the day before. ...The changes of levels in the nature of incidents help you understand what was happening before, so that you can reschedule your plans of action.... If something is not efficient, we have to change it.... You cannot anticipate for any danger, because something new may happen, but you have to practically define your level of performance and justify any deviation from this level. For example, as far as the port is concerned, we measured that we are efficient for over 90%... The figure is not bad but is not satisfactory. As far as the port facility is concerned, our plans have a target of 97-97.5%, which is also a satisfactory rate and, to my understanding, cannot be superseded”<sup>137</sup>.

Whereas OLPa has the obligation to guarantee security within the port facility and the efficiency of the security measures employed through the control over every person or vehicle entering the restricted areas, the HCG is instead responsible for the actual control of the port facility and the enforcement of activities of crime prevention and policing. The HCG performs physical checks, through document controls or vehicle scanning, deal with the chastisement of illicit offences, and investigate potential criminal activities, such as smuggling or falsification of documents (see Tryfon 2012a, 2012b).

In performing regular operations, time becomes an essential variable: controls need to be executed within a definite timeframe, with the need to safeguard the ordinary mobility of maritime transport, without obstructions or delays. As Heyman notes (2009:46), “A tight policy at ports might result in a few more arrests, but it would tie up traffic interminably and cause howls of protest. A loose operation would reduce delays but would weaken the port's screening function”. The ISPS Code endorses this principle, by stating that the measures and procedures performed to regulate access within port facilities “shall be applied at the port facility in such a manner as to cause

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

a minimum of interference with, or delay to, passengers, ships, ship's personnel and visitors, goods and services" (Part A, art. 14.1). For this reason, whereas tickets and documents are always controlled, physical checks on people and luggage are performed more occasionally, usually at the level of 20%, in order not to slow down or hinder logistical flows. In the words of the PFSM,

"if I perform 100% of passenger checks, I will go to obstruct the operations of the port, and I am not supposed to do that. You do not have the right to delay the passengers and the normal flow of the lines, unless you are forced to do so, because of a specific problem"<sup>138</sup>.

The physical control of cars and lorries is a stepwise activity that requires much more preparation and experience among the authorities in charge to perform it, in order to maintain a balance between the need for security and the regularity of flows (see Flynn 2000). Unlike passengers, every single car and lorry is inspected, at least at a basic level. In the case of lorries, the first level of control consists in opening the trailer and performing a macroscopic examination of the cargo, which must correspond to both the transportation document and the declaration of the driver, usually only a generic description of the load. This operation usually requires up to three minutes, with the fundamental contribution of human expertise and resources in recognising and neutralising threats before they endanger the regular unfolding of port operations. As the PFSM noted:

"Our belief and our experience say that a well-trained inspection team cannot be superseded by any technical means. The technical means are tools helping the inspection. ...it is a matter of human ability to understand the problems and take measures. This is why I said that the most crucial factor is the human factor, because humans create problems, and humans are supposed to detect them. This is a dynamic, potential, and reactive system; it is not just a rule"<sup>139</sup>.

Qualified personnel are trained for such operations, in order to detect particular speculative indications and prevent risks in port facilities. Increasing levels of security checks might in fact be implemented in the event that cumulative suspicious indications arise (see Heyman 2009), extending the temporal span of the control procedure. A second level of control is accomplished through the use of specific technologies, shifting the object of control from the vehicle (see Walters 2015b) to the body (Amoore 2006; Salter 2007; Mountz 2010). Length-measurement tools, which

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

are used to reveal airlocks inside trailers, or backscatter-technology scanners can be employed to control the cargo and detect unwanted or suspicious presences<sup>140</sup>, disclosing what Galis et al. (2016) have called “the dis/abled bodies folded in migrant crypts”.

With document checks, the ISPS Code creates an additional layer of security that *de facto* transcends the European principles on the free movement of persons, engendering overlapping and conflicting sovereignties (Neilson and Rossiter 2013). Since Patras is an intra-Schengen port, theoretically authorities are not supposed to control documents; nevertheless, they “perform practically 100% of passport check, even if this is called ‘police controls’”<sup>141</sup>. Document checks apply not only to passengers, but more in general to anyone, even public officials, wishing to enter the port facility for whichever reason, either occasionally or regularly: “it could be an authority, a policeman, a Port Authority officer, an employee of the company, or someone transporting goods for the ships”<sup>142</sup>.

The port facility becomes therefore an extra-territorial space (see Mezzadra and Neilson 2013) where the only laws that apply are those of securitisation and logistics: unbounded movement within, with pervasive control of, global supply chains. In the specific context of ports, the process of securitisation acquires a crucial role within the global geography of logistics, assuring that the continuous acceleration of distribution chains occurs in a protected environment (Heyman 2009; Cowen 2014). The complex assemblage of security measures envisaged by the ISPS Code enable the regular mobility of certain flows while preventing threats from creating obstructions or delays. Increasingly prone to technically and economically efficient criteria, securitisation appears as an overwhelming force that produces and crafts border areas, leaving nonetheless some margins of error. In the spectacle of the border (De Genova 2012b, 2013b), where everything needs to be brought to light to be spotted and captured, there is always something that remains hidden and invisible, escaping seizure (Mubi Brighenti 2007). It is precisely here that migrants can take advantage of imperceptible failures to eschew the web of controls and security checks.

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

### *Migrant extra-logistical knowledge*

Craig Martin (2012:357) defines the “parallel practices ... utilised by stowaways and smuggling gangs to infiltrate commodity networks [as] extra-logistical knowledge”, in juxtaposition to the logistical practices that regulate the geography of mobilities at global level. Through their daily attempts to reach the ferryboat docked in the port facility area, migrants have developed an outstanding perceptiveness of security measures adopted, making them sensibly aware of the different areas of intervention of police forces and the apparently varying levels of security employed by the different shipping companies. The division of the port area through fences and checkpoints has raised migrants’ knowledge about the different treatments that they can expect from police forces.

Those migrants who experienced the materiality of security controls in both ports, often as a result of the complex geographies of detention, readmission, and return to Europe (De Genova and Peutz 2010; Mountz and Hiemstra 2014), could easily grasp the intensification of securitisation measures over the span of few years. The relocation of the port in the southern periphery of the city not only exacerbated migrants’ living conditions but also compromised their chances to clandestinely embark on a ferryboat. According to an Afghan migrant,

“Now in Patras it is too difficult to go to Italy ... At that time, only people working in the ships were checking, but now also police and commandos are controlling, sometimes with dogs. Before, there were no dogs; there was the police that were checking only the trucks. ...But now it is difficult. The old port was better because it only had one parking lot, and it was very easy to go to the trucks and sneak under them. Now it is not easy, because the police check inside and under the trucks, sometimes with dogs, and then they go to the other parking lot. Now there are two parking lots, and if dogs find you, they kick you out from the port”<sup>143</sup>.

The extra-logistical knowledge does not limit itself to the cognisance of the different security measures in the two ports; it also involves a wide array of practices and tactics that, emerging from the everyday materiality of the border, enables migrants to avoid (or at least attempt to do so) the multiplicity of controls and checks implemented by police forces and shipping companies (Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos 2015, 2016). Such knowledge is enriched with the creation of an *ad hoc* language that creates new imaginaries, renames and reconstructs social reality, bringing it under control: as

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<sup>143</sup> Semi-structured interview with A. R., Afghanistan, 30/05/2015.

Kara argues (2016:188; see also Foucault 1994; R. Jones 2009), “Language is always an action, resistance and struggle”. The peculiar redefinition of common objects appears not simply as a way to exorcise migrants’ fears or expectations about the crossing, but also as a strategy to re-appropriate and make them their own.

The ISPS fence surrounding the port facility is depicted by some migrants as a “fire line”, epitomising the institutionalisation of “static markers of sovereign jurisdictions” (Novak 2011:742) beyond which a different border regime is activated, and violence is intensified. In the reconstruction of a Sudanese migrant, when you cross the “fire line”, there are different controls inside, and police can also employ force; they can even catch and hold you. Outside this fence, instead, the police usually just push you back, making you get off the lorry<sup>144</sup>. Similarly, another Afghan migrant thus described his perceptions about the different police forces operating in the port area:

“Sometimes, you know, the police inside the port, they have big motorbikes [referring to the HCG, operating inside the ISPS fence]... yesterday they beat one guy there. That police can beat you, if they catch you inside the port: they have one room there [he was pointing at the checkpoint inside the port, where lorries and cars come out], they take you there and they beat you. After that, they release you. But the commandos and the police inside, they are good. The commandos don’t beat you; they just stay inside the port and they tell you, ‘Go out from the port, my friend’. But that police can beat you, if they catch you inside the port”<sup>145</sup>.

Not only have migrants become capable to discern among the different areas of intervention and relative police forces, but they have also developed exceptional “knowledge and practices of mobility” (Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos 2015:53) about ships and lorries, memorising their timetables and destinations. Although controls are performed in a coordinated, mechanistic and uniform way, migrants seem to have evolved a particular propensity for certain shipping companies, according to the degree of security measures put in place. Sliding underneath a lorry does not necessarily guarantee access to a previously selected ship (in case more than one ship is docked in the port); yet, migrants rank shipping companies according to the distance of their journey, their flag, and the security measures employed.

In the early afternoon, the arrival of ferryboats – and consequently of lorries – disrupts the everyday routine, prompting migrants to suspend the conviviality of

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<sup>144</sup> Informal interview with B., Sudan, 20/06/2015.

<sup>145</sup> Semi-structured interview with M. T., Afghanistan, 03/05/2015.

lunchtime and frantically scatter across the factories, in preparation to head to the port area. To some extent, this process repeats itself during certain evenings of the week, when night ferryboats are scheduled. Those who have access to the Internet become appointed with checking whether and which ships are expected to dock, in order to get prepared for reaching the port area: their mobile phones become strategic devices capable to connect them not only with their families back home, but also to new places and times, opening up future trajectories (Naficy 2007, in Leurs and Prabhakar 2018:262). The presence of a night ship might attract those migrants who seize every potential opportunity to escape the country, although some of them might remain in the factory and enjoy the company of the others, if they believe that higher security measures will be put in place.

On a summer evening, during an informal conversation with a Sudanese migrant on the roof of one of Peiraiki-Patraiki's buildings overlooking the whole port area, we both noticed a Minoan ferryboat approaching the port. He immediately said that, according to his experience, going inside that ship is difficult, because it waves an Italian flag. "It's from your country: it's Italian, there are more controls". Whereas the external controls in the port facility are performed in a uniform way, he continued, those for boarding the ship depend on the flag that each ship carries: in that case controls made by Minoan are usually stricter than those performed by other companies. Not only is it difficult to board the ship, he carried on, it is also almost impossible to disembark: in fact, he added, the majority of migrants that manage to sneak in always come back after a few days. It is for this reason, he concluded, that many migrants refuse to approach the port area when there is only that ferryboat, as was the case that evening<sup>146</sup>.

Although daily controls are carried out in a standardised and regular way<sup>147</sup>, different perceptions of the effective functionality of borders emerge among migrants through their everyday experiences (see Gropas 2004). The same impression is indeed recollected among migrants in other factories. An Afghan migrant admitted that Superfast represents his favourite shipping company, for the rapidity of its ferryboats to reach Italy. On the contrary, he despised Minoan, for the meticulousness and strictness of controls, often performed with the use of dogs, which made it difficult to enter the ship<sup>148</sup>. Similarly, another Afghan migrant acknowledged that, unlike

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<sup>146</sup> See note 144.

<sup>147</sup> See note 132.

<sup>148</sup> Informal interview with A., Afghanistan, 28/07/2015.

Minoan, which double-checks the lorries before embarking, Superfast ferries do not carry out any additional layer of checks, making it preferable among some migrants<sup>149</sup>.

While the ISPS Code establishes rules and criteria to access the port facility, producing a space replete with fences, security forces, checkpoints, and document controls, local inhabitants living and working in the proximity of the port area tend to trace and convey subtler and more indistinct borders, which reproduce in reality the mental schemas of “us” versus “them” confrontation (Meena 2014; see also Van Houtum 1999). It is on these more impalpable borders that the final part of the chapter concentrates.

### *Spatial proximity/social distance*

In her analysis of Albanian population in the city of Thessaloniki, Kokkali (2007; cp. Lykogianni and Vaiou 2007) argues that, despite the widespread spatial distribution of Albanian immigrants throughout the city and their geographical proximity with the native population, social divisions remain widely observable. Although living in the same neighbourhoods and sharing the same urban spaces, the immigrant and native communities seem to maintain a relative social homogeneity, with scarce interconnections between them.

In the port/border area of Patras the social separation between groups appears exacerbated not only for the fundamentally diverse socio-economic conditions, but also for the transient character of migration, which creates “moments of discontinuity in the social fabric” (Shields 1991:83, in Noussia and Lyons 2009:619). Borders reproduce class and racial distinctions across the city, peremptorily dividing the migrant settlements from the surrounding white and wealthy neighbourhoods (Çankaya 2016). The same representation of security among the native population, often imbued with semi-colonial forms of humanitarianism (Rajaram 2002; Rozakou 2012), acquires the contour of a socio-political construction that has to do less with a perceived threat to the social order than with moral or aesthetic issues: the recurrent theme is indeed related to the image of cleanliness and prestige that the city should project to external visitors. This issue appears more vividly in the mind of workers located in the old port area, given the then higher number of migrants and their contiguity with the city centre, although similar concerns have been expressed even among people living or working in the area of the new port.

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<sup>149</sup> See note 124.

According to the employee of a travel agency in the old port area, the former migrant settlement “was a very, very, very big problem... [in particular] for tourists: tourists used to come and go from the old port, go around the city, visit the centre, so it was not good for them to see such people around”<sup>150</sup>. For the owner of Patras Palace, a four-star hotel located in the city centre, few steps away from the entrance of the old port, it was a question of both safety and aesthetics: “you don’t feel safe if you see a *picture* of hundreds of people around every day. Most of them are not dangerous, but you don’t know”; – Was that a bad thing... – I tried to ask, but I didn’t finish my sentence before he anticipated me: “...for *the image of the city!*”<sup>151</sup>.

Some informants have nonetheless experienced security problems concerning immigrants, although the boundaries of socio-psychological perceptions and real threats remain blurred (see Vollmer 2017). One of the employees of the Acropole Hotel in the city centre reported indeed few cases of petty larcenies in the area: “they were not such bad events, but you know... we are a 24-hour hotel, there is always a person at night, and sometimes I am that person. During the night, you actually could see immigrants walk along the street and look inside, it was weird”<sup>152</sup>. Others witnessed occasional chases between migrants and police in the city centre, although no particular problem of security for the business activities was signalled. If many agree that the situation is now generally better, because of the removal of migrants from the central area, some acknowledge that the problem was just moved away in order to restore the city centre to its original everydayness and re-establish the “image” it deserves.

In relation to the presence of migrants in the new port area, similar perceptions can be grasped, reinforcing the idea that the aesthetic dimension of migrant visibility is strictly intertwined with issues of politics and power (Mubi Brighenti 2007). For most of the people approached, migrants in the area do not constitute a direct threat for their personal security or business activity, but rather a negative impact for the image of the city. The vastness and marginality of the place, coupled with the reduction in the number of migrants, made the issue relatively negligible or overlooked. For the employee of a local distillery, migrants “do not represent a problem because they are not too many”<sup>153</sup>. Another informant pointed at the

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<sup>150</sup> Informal interview with the employee of Manolopoulou Travel Agency, 06/02/2015.

<sup>151</sup> Semi-structured interview with the owner of the Astir Hotel, 16/04/2015, emphasis added.

<sup>152</sup> Informal interview with the receptionist of the Acropole Hotel, 22/06/2015.

<sup>153</sup> Informal interview with an employee of Spyliopoulos Factory, 15/01/2015.

differences between the previous and the current situation, stating that “Here they don’t disturb us: they are mainly people with papers who stay in those old buildings, protecting the place. ...now we don’t feel the problem, because the place is huge”. In the old port, instead, “the situation was terrible, because everything was there, much closer... migrants were in the streets, trying to reach the ferryboats and pass to the other side. We used to see people all the time: they were sleeping around or staying in the limits of the harbour”<sup>154</sup>.

While the presence of migrants does not seem to constitute a matter of security for inhabitants and local commercial activities, it still represents an aesthetic question for the city, invoking or evoking a humanitarian intervention (see Cabot 2013; Pallister-Wilkins 2015). Despite acknowledging that migrants are “people looking for a better life”, the employee of a local furniture shop claimed, “it’s not a good image for the area, with the police always running after them”<sup>155</sup>. Similarly, the sales supervisor of a car dealer admitted that migrants “haven’t affected directly our work, but it’s bad for the city, it’s not a good image”. However, he recognised, “it’s difficult to handle those humans; there is a big humanity problem”. When I asked him whether there have been problems related to security in the area, he denied and after muttering and thinking for a couple of seconds, he added that “there were little problems, but most are humanity problems; the main concern should be about humanity, because it’s not right for these people to live like that. If they have better conditions, it will be better for everyone”<sup>156</sup>.

Whereas for most local inhabitants the issue of security appears as a social necessity to preserve the image of the city, for several migrants it represents a cumbersome obstacle that hinders their journey towards Italy and the rest of Europe. The legal provisions of the ISPS Code have reinforced and multiplied the security measures in the port area, in order to safeguard the uninterrupted logistics of local supply chains and prevent the emergence of potential threats. In combination with the land use references, the ISPS Code has enforced its authority on a delimited part of the port zone, superimposing and imposing upon the European laws on migration and mobility. Intertwined with the dispositions of the European border and migration regime, the ISPS Code has impeded, decelerated and diverted, yet not totally blocked, the mobility of migrants within the European space.

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<sup>154</sup> Informal interview with the employee of Hertz car rental, 30/06/2015.

<sup>155</sup> Informal interview with an employee of Georgiopoulos furniture shop, 16/01/2015.

<sup>156</sup> Informal interview with an employee of Nissan car dealer, 16/01/2015.

## 5.4 Conclusion

In the port/border area of Patras, the logistical management of flows assumed the form of two seemingly contradictory moments. On the one hand, multi-scalar economic and logistical forces have pushed for the demolition of barriers to the circulation of capital, goods, and people, consistently with the development of the European common market. On the other hand, a complex architecture of mechanisms and laws have produced, multiplied, and relocated barriers to guarantee the security of capitalist relations. Far from being dichotomous, these processes have regulated the safety of commercial exchanges and disciplined the various mobilities across the European space. With the multiplicity of connections, contradictions and conflicts they encountered, they developed in an uneven and multiform pattern, giving the port/border area of Patras its unique configuration.

This chapter shed light on the second of such processes, that of border securitisation at European and national level, with its repercussions on the local specificity of the port/border area of Patras. Eschewing the rigid openness/closure dichotomy that characterise certain ideas of borders (Andreas 1996, 2003; Coleman 2005), the chapter developed a critical approach to securitisation, conceived not merely as a process of multiplication of borders and border practices, but rather as a complex array of policies, dispositions, and measures that regulate the variegated and intertwining mobilities of capital, trades, and people within the wider framework of the “operations of capital” (Mezzadra and Neilson 2015).

In so doing the chapter raised two interrelated arguments: first, it invited to consider the process of border securitisation not just as a set of independent measures to block or deter undesired mobilities, but as part and parcel of the intrinsic mechanisms that safeguard and foster the circulation of capital, commodities, and people across the European single market. Second, and correlated, it also envisaged the process of border securitisation as necessarily involving continuous interrelations, negotiations, and struggles among and within a multiplicity of actors at and across numerous levels. Such multifarious relations continuously compel the process of border securitisation to model its homogeneous and monotonous character on the everyday materiality of the border.

The chapter analysed two particular, interrelated moments of the process of border securitisation. In the framework of the European border and migration regime, migration and asylum policies have attempted to regulate and discipline migratory

flows, producing a docile and malleable labour force for the requirements of the national labour market. Through the construction of physical and bureaucratic barriers, these policies continuously regulate the spatio-temporal mobilities of migrants, governing their access to, circulation within, and expulsion from the European territory.

In relation to migration, national policies have constituted a (purposefully) tardive and inefficient reaction to the continuous arrival of migrants, who often fell into illegality and enriched the already large informal labour market. Regularisation programmes have attempted to provide a response to irregular migration within the country, although with scarce results. Social exclusion, ephemeral regularisations, detention and deportation measures have in fact represented the rule, rather than the exception, in the management of migration movements. With regards to asylum, the transition from a police-led to an independent and specialised system has certainly contributed to a general improvement of the system itself. However, the upgrade of the asylum system to European standards has reproduced the European mechanisms of filtering and screening of transnational mobilities at national level, redrawing the geographies of access, circulation, and expulsion of migrants to and from the European territory (Garelli and Tazzioli 2016; Tazzioli 2017a).

The chapter also examined a second moment in the process of border securitisation, i.e. the implementation of the ISPS Code in the port/border area of Patras, with the contradictions and conflicts it created on the ground. Whereas migration and asylum policies produce less manifest yet no less compelling spatial and temporal obstacles, the ISPS Code creates more visible barriers and procedures to prevent unwanted migrants from crossing certain borders, decelerating or diverting their mobility. The ISPS Code has not only established a standardised set of practices and procedures to guarantee the correct and safe unfolding of port operations, regulating and securitising the mobilities traversing it, but it has also erected physical barriers, such as fences and checkpoints, to hinder the access of undesired migrants into the port area.

Several institutions and authorities are accountable for the correct implementation of the ISPS Code within the port area and in its immediate surroundings. In the port facility, the HCG performs security checks on vehicles and persons to spot undocumented migrants, which every day attempt to embark in Patras either with false documents, through smuggling networks, or hiding autonomously

underneath lorries. In the entity port, the HCG, OLPa private forces and the HP constantly push away those migrants trying to reach the port facility. Along the national road, the HP carry out daily patrols to prevent migrant from reaching the port area during embarkation times, with the help of OLPa private security forces scoping back and forth the area along the external fence of the port.

In conclusion, the process of border securitisation in the port/border of Patras has manifested itself both through visible fences and controlled checkpoints, and through a whole series of legal provisions that have actually decreased or diverted migrants' inclusion into the Greek and European territories. These combined measures, it has been argued, have operated in synergy with, rather than in opposition to, the neoliberal forces described in the previous chapter: whereas the latter have tended to demolish barriers for the smooth and free circulation of goods, capital, workers, and services, the former have put in practice security measures to guarantee the safe unfolding of logistics activities and the "differential inclusion" of migrants within the European space. Migrants and asylum seekers, however, have often escaped and disrupted these hegemonic spatiotemporal processes, creating and shaping their own spaces of existence and trajectories of flight.

## 6 Border struggles

Voi non potete fermare il vento: gli fate solo perdere tempo  
(You can't stop the wind, you just make it waste time)

Fabrizio De André 1973, *Canzone del Maggio*.

### 6.1 Introduction

The current chapter will examine a third moment of the production of borders, i.e. the potential formation of a migrant subjectivity and its multifarious relations with, and struggles against, the European border and migration regime, thus bringing to completion the concept of borders as “meeting points”. It will look at how the mobility of migrants within the European and Greek territories has negotiated, resisted, and defied the dominant practices of containment and the logistical circulation of people and goods. It will also analyse the challenges that migrant routes pose to the institutionalised geographies of admission, detention, and deportation that regulate the standard path towards asylum at European and national level. As Tazzioli puts it (2015a:11), “migrant struggles are always strategic movements resisting a certain configuration of power relations within a given of governmentality”.

Although acknowledging the inherently political significance of migrants' unauthorised crossings, the chapter has no pretension to claim that “those migrating without authorisation are necessarily held up as exemplary political subjects in and of themselves” (Squire 2017:13). Therefore, it will attempt to eschew a romanticised reading of the role of agential forces in producing borders and determining the shift and reinforcement of securitisation mechanisms. It will do so by critically disassembling the variegated classed, raced, social fractures that proliferate within and cut across migrant groups and individuals, in the context of the multiplicity of counter-hegemonic practices that migrants perform in their everyday life to contest the European and national process of bordering.

The chapter will raise two interrelated arguments, aiming to enrich the AoM approach and build the concept of borders as “meeting points”. First, it will claim that adopting a relational, rather than a dichotomous, vision could provide a more nuanced and grounded analysis of the structure/agency opposition shaping borders. The AoM approach, epitomised in the “border as method” epistemological gaze, has the undeniable merit of considering both structural and agential forces, but it does so with a particular emphasis on the conflictual relations governing them, over-politicising the

role of migrant struggles as the primary cause and engine of social changes (Scheel 2013). The issue here is neither to methodologically conflate structure and agency for a simultaneous analysis of the two forces – a longstanding critic that has been moved to Giddens’ structuration theory (see Bakewell 2010; Scheel 2013) – nor to privilege a temporal emergence of either of the two – a debate that has opposed the AoM with critical realists (see Archer 1995; Mezzadra 2004; Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Squire 2017). The point is rather to conceive structure and agency in a dynamic and ever-changing relation, grasping the multifarious and intertwined actions, connections, and conflicts that arise between and within them in specific and situated contexts.

Second, and consequently, it will argue that the AoM approach should take into consideration the reproduction of power relations within and among migrants’ groups, which affects the eulogised homogeneity of migrants. In conceiving migrants’ autonomy as the primary source of social change, the AoM approach presents undocumented migrants as a unified force that has collectively endeavoured to unhinge the multi-scalar mechanisms of mobility control and subvert the European border and migration regime. In so doing, it tends to romanticise migrants and migration movements more generally, overlooking or failing to capture the multiple divisions of class, race, and gender that intersect migrants’ everyday experiences and reproduce power relations within and among migrant groups. It is only by adopting a more critical and nuanced analysis of migration movements and migrant subjectivities, capable of contemplating the manifold facets entailing between and within them, that it is possible to understand, I argue, how bordering practices are produced outside – and, in turn, replicated within – migrant groups.

The chapter will analyse four different but interconnected moments in the process of the formation of a migrant subjectivity, with particular emphasis on their uneven evolution through space and time. The socio-political framework under which migration patterns have unfolded in the city will allow for an overarching comprehension of the continuity and changes between the old camp and the current settlements, and a critical analysis of the twenty-year long process of migrants’ spatial re-appropriation vis-à-vis the socio-economic transformations that the port area has undergone. The chapter will then provide an in-depth examination of migrants’ everyday life, discussing in particular how they relate with the surrounding environment, construct and negotiate their presence, and contest or resist bordering

activities. Through the active exploration of their everyday life, the chapter will also investigate how class, race, and other social bordering practices shape and intersect migrant identities, reproducing social and ethnic divisions among them. By examining the everyday lives of migrants in the port/border area of Patras, the chapter will show how migrants' living space, albeit precarious and temporary, is filled with material practices and symbolic meanings that constantly defy the bordering processes activated by logistics imperatives, although reproducing, in some cases, those same divisive dynamics among and within them. Through the reconnection of the threads interwoven along the fieldwork chapters, the chapter will eventually advocate for the employment of the concept of borders as "meeting points" to grasp the manifold processes occurring at borders and the multiplicity of negotiations, relationships, and contrasts between and within them.

## **6.2 (Re)appropriating spaces**

### *The first migrant settlements*

In his analysis of the process of production of space, Lefebvre (1991:164ff.) outlines two "opposite and inseparable" processes that regulate social space: domination and appropriation. In its continuous attempt to expand and develop, capitalism tends to subjugate and govern spaces, using either coercive powers, technological means, or architectural constructions. The dominated space represents the dominant space in capitalist societies, "the realization of a master's project" (*ibid.*:165) that has historically been inclined to incorporate nature and labour under its logic of profit.

Although the process of spatial production is hegemonic insofar as it tends to regulate the everyday socio-spatial relations of subaltern populations and subsume their ambitions and desires, there always remains an internal fracture that escapes domination and ignites resistance (Lefebvre 1991; Kipfer 2008; Ronneberger 2008). Appropriated space constitutes, in this respect, the medium and objective for potentially counteracting such process of pervasive subjugation. Distinct from the concept of property, which is "at best a necessary precondition, and most often merely an epiphenomenon" (Lefebvre 1991:165), appropriation entails a particular symbolical or political relation with a certain natural or artificial space, which is therefore given new meaning and substance to serve the needs of individuals or groups (see also Purcell 2002, 2003).

Seemingly antithetical and apparently irreconcilable, domination and appropriation are strictly intertwined and mutually generated. Capitalism has always tended to politically overcome or militarily conquer urban and rural territories, imposing its dominant rationality over the relations of production, distribution, and consumption. This process, however, has historically occurred in an uneven and variegated manner (Peck and Theodore 2007; N. Smith 2008), leaving pockets of contestation and resistance. The boundaries between domination and appropriation remain therefore blurred: despite the attempts to seal, defend, or homogenise space, the barriers and frontiers that divide the inside from the outside are “always relative and... always permeable” (Lefebvre 1991:176).

Far from being repressive institutions located beyond the realm of the law (see Agamben 1998, 2005), the self-organised migrant settlements in Patras reflect such ontological construction, disclosing an interactive and at times conflictual relation with the dominant rationales of capitalism and the multi-scalar geographies of mobilities (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008). The employment of the plural form in analysing the settlements can better grasp, I argue, the temporariness and volatility of migrant presence in the city, and the multiplicity of spaces and networks that they continuously produce, entwine, and dismantle, according to the changing dynamics of b/ordering and mobility.

On the one hand, migrants have always tended to escape, contest, or resist the European border and migration regime manifesting itself with the violence of police repression on the streets and the stringency of migration and asylum policies. On the other hand, the settlements have been functional to the border and migration regime itself, decelerating the mobility of undocumented migrants through the European space. Untethered from governmental restrictions and yet constantly under watch and periodically demolished by local authorities, the settlements appear indeed as a highly transitory and mobile solution that regulates migrants’ temporal access to the informal labour market across the Adriatic Sea and over the rest of Europe (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Rygiel 2011).

It is in the early 1990s that the first migratory movements to and through Patras began to materialise. The intertwining combinations of logistical developments and asylum dispositions at European and national level made Patras a crossroad of overlapping dynamics. The restructuring of global capital was paving the way for the consolidation of the European common market, through the reconfiguration of its

internal and external boundaries, and the development of an all-encompassing logistical network to connect the European territory. Transit traffic through the port of Patras was on the rise, given the limited or closed logistical articulations through Igoumenitsa and the Balkans, while the first projects for its expansion were already on the table.

Determined to escape the country and yet stuck in a permanent limbo, migrants started to occupy empty places around the port area, re-appropriating or subtracting those spaces that capitalism discarded and negotiating their presence in the city. Disused buildings and the abandoned train depot of St. Dionysus, just opposite the passenger terminal of the old port, became home for Kurdish migrants fleeing from the First Gulf War in Iraq and from the subsequent escalation of violence in south-eastern Turkey (Spinthourakis and Antonopoulou 2011). As migrant presence expanded and intensified<sup>157</sup>, so proceeded the spatial occupation of abandoned buildings in the immediate proximities of the port. An “old, multi-story, boarded up hotel ... scheduled for renovations that were never completed because of the owner’s financial difficulties” (*ibid.*:78) and the wrecked fish market of the city behind the central bus station constituted “their own city within the city”<sup>158</sup>: a self-organised village, with small stores, places to cook, and recreational areas.

Yet, as Rygiel argued in his analysis of the Calais migrant settlement (Rygiel 2011:14), “the greater danger lay in the fact that these camps were beginning to have permanence”, thus becoming the cause of disagreement among local authorities and developers resolute in re-generating the area and re-establishing order (Hawksfield 2017). Moved by interrelated public and private interests, processes of gentrification and urban restyling have often involved the displacement of marginalised population (Schmid 2011). When the city began to renovate the old fish market, which became an art and business centre, migrants were forced to move to an open green space in the northern end of the port area, between Evrota Street and the Milichos Creek<sup>159</sup>.

It is here that the infamous migrant camp of Patras took shape (Hole 2012). The location of the settlements was not fortuitous; rather, it adapted to the specificity of

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<sup>157</sup> At the turn of the century, the Kurdish presence supposedly amounted to about 500 people around the port area, with another 1500 dispersed in the city (Papadopoulou 2003; Spinthourakis and Antonopoulou 2011). Yet, estimating their number in the country and the city remained an arduous task. While many tended to avoid the formal registration procedures, asylum applicants were subject to lengthy procedures (which could not cope with the number of arrivals and departures) and classified according to their nationality rather than their ethnicity (Papadopoulou 2003, 2004).

<sup>158</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Milionis, 19/02/2015.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

the logistical networks in and around Patras, which compelled lorries to cross the city centre before accessing the port area. The main settlement was located in the vicinity of a traffic light, where lorries would stop one last time before entering the port. Another settlement was strategically positioned at the crossroad between Iroon Politechniou and Kanellopoulou Street, where the high concentration of lorries directed to the port during peak times represented a favourable condition for migrants inclined to sneak underneath them (see Figure 31). Tracing imaginary and corporeal connections with the most notorious migrant camp in Calais, such settlement was likewise called “the jungle” (Migreurop 2010; MEDU 2013), evoking a “developmental” distinction between the civilised world of the city and the natural or pre-civilised world of the state of nature (Rigby and Schlembach 2013).



**Figure 31: Location of migrant settlements in relation to the lorries' routes.**  
Source: Elaboration from Google Earth.

By the end of the 1990s, migrants' composition had changed: the presence of Kurdish migrants diminished, whereas Afghans increased in number, first due to the Taliban persecutions and then to the international conflict following the 9/11 attacks<sup>160</sup> that forced thousands to leave their country. As the number of migrants grew during the 2000s, conflicts with local authorities and citizens became more frequent and intense (Spinthourakis and Antonopoulou 2011; Lafazani 2013). Located in a green untamed area surrounded by wealthy residential blocks of flats overlooking the beach and the marina (see Figure 32), the position of the main settlement soon attracted the oppositions not only of nearby residents and commercial activities, but also of urban

<sup>160</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Ladas, 23/07/2015.

developers and real estate agencies, preoccupied by the potential reduction in future investments and the lowering prices of properties and rents (Mantanika 2009; Lafazani 2013).



**Figure 32: The old migrant camp (red square) surrounded by residential buildings. The coastal road on the left-hand side of the picture is Iroon Politechniou, connecting the bypass of Patras with the old port (further south). Source: Courtesy of Mr Ladas, personal elaboration.**

Although spatially bounded and surrounded by dense vegetation, the multifarious connections traversing the settlement could propagate to places as distant as Afghanistan and as wide as the EU (see Massey 1994). Juxtaposing several spaces in one place (Lafazani 2013), the settlement came to resemble a small Afghan village, hosting about 200 tents and sheds, a mosque, some small shops selling food, and open spaces to play football or volleyball (see Figure 33). Its presence transcended the local diatribes of land properties and urban development and reverberated to European and global level. In that period, Patras was indeed at the centre of the international stage, hosting the 2004 Olympic Games (whose motto was, quite ironically, “Welcome home”) and being the 2006 European Capital of Culture. The momentousness of the city under the spotlight clashed with the undesired visibility of the camp and the parallel, coveted, invisibility of migrants, whose intention was to leave the country unseen, concealed inside ferryboats (Mantanika 2009; Hole 2012; see also Pezzani and Heller 2013). Between 2007 and 2008, the camp reached its peak of about 1,500

occupants<sup>161</sup>, causing increasing tensions between migrants, local citizens, and municipal authorities. At the same time, police interventions escalated to terrorise migrants and intimate them to leave the settlement, engendering in some cases violent responses (N. King 2016). In one of such occasions, on the early morning of the 12th of July 2009 the police closed the main access routes to the port area and entered the camp, evacuating or arresting its remaining occupiers, and eventually setting it on fire.



**Figure 33: Detail of the old migrant camp.**  
Source: Courtesy of Mr Ladas.

The destruction of the camp reshaped the geographies of migrant settlement and mobility within the city and the whole country. With the forced eviction of hundreds of migrants from the centre, another phase of spatial re-appropriation interweaved with a renovated and more urgent “insistence on space” (Garelli, Sossi, and Tazzioli 2013). As the spotlights on the camp turned off, migrants needed to re-articulate “their strategies for existence, dodging raids, joining forces with associations and other established collectives as well as inventing their own” (*ibid.*:210). Those who had previously abandoned the camp or managed to avoid arrests sprawled into the city, spreading through other smaller settlements around the port area or occupying abandoned houses and buildings around the city (Hole 2012). Others moved to the

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.* Numbers are sometimes discordant, see Hole 2012.

northern port of Igoumenitsa (Lafazani 2013) or to the border with Albania<sup>162</sup>, in the attempt to leave the country through other routes.

By the late 2000s migrant composition had changed again, enriched by the presence of the first Sudanese and Somali migrants that arrived and settled in empty places and parks within the city (Spinthourakis and Antonopoulou 2011; Hole 2012). The geographical spread of migrants around the city reflected not only the national and ethnic divisions amongst them, but also the intergroup rivalries for the control of the accesses to the port area (Spinthourakis and Antonopoulou 2011). Afghans remained in the area of the old port until the new one started its operations in July 2011, while about 200 Sudanese and Somali migrants occupied the then-abandoned train station of St. Andreas, just behind the Cathedral with the same name, halfway between the old port and the new under construction (Spinthourakis and Antonopoulou 2011; Hole 2012).

### *The factories*

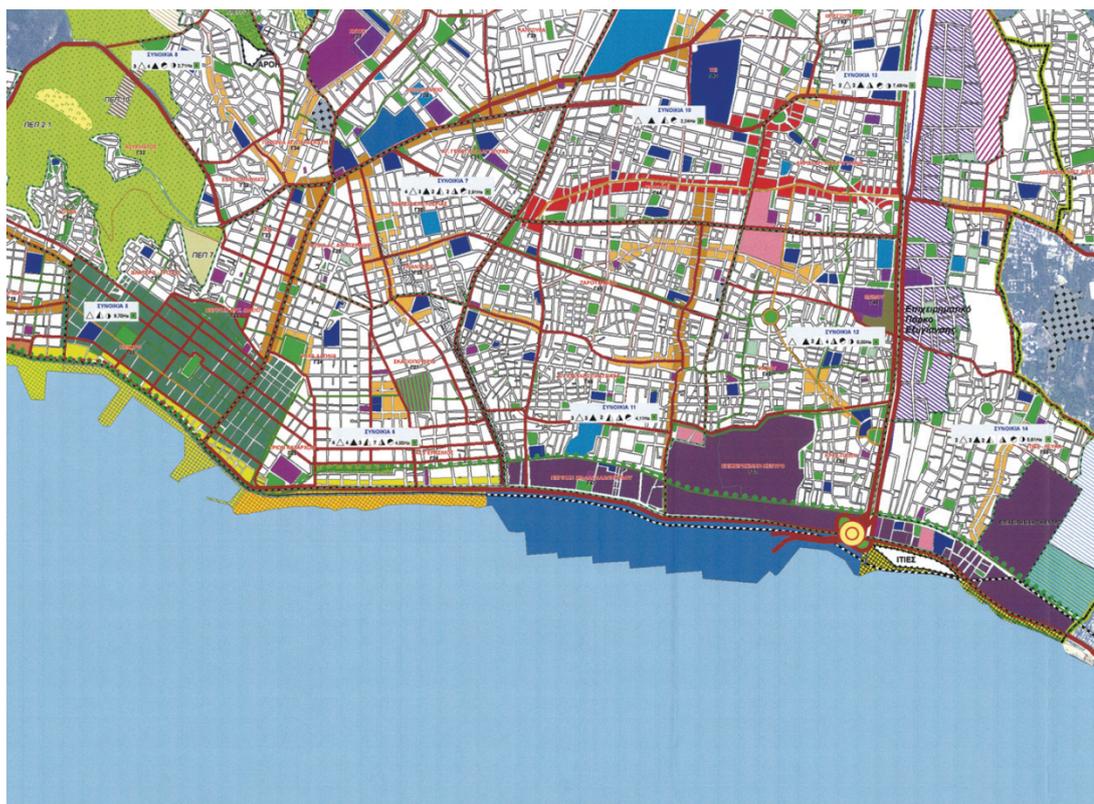
The relocation of port activities in July 2011 subverted the centre-periphery relations and re-compacted the spatial fragmentation of migrant occupations (Gandolfi 2013). Although relieved from the crossing of heavy vehicles, the city centre suffered from the financial crisis, which undermined the geography of consumerism and trade. The suburban areas of the city turned instead into a relatively thriving logistical hub for licit and illicit mobilities, attracting the few hundred migrants left in the city. In the remains of an abandoned industrial area in front of the new port, migrants slowly re-appropriated new spaces, far away from the city's sight and yet so close to the ferryboats leading to Italy. A tragic aftermath of the 1980s process of de-industrialisation and relocation of production at global scale, these empty factories now constitute the "perpetually temporary shelter" (Altin 2017) of migrants *en route* to Italy and the rest of Europe.

The re-appropriation of the factories has clashed with the attempted process of their "diversion" (Lefebvre 1991) put in place by their new owners. Unlike appropriation, diversion is the reconversion of the original purposes and uses of an existing space, thus eluding an additional process of spatial production or creation (*ibid.*). The deserted complexes that now form the suburban landscape of Patras have been indeed acquired by public and private actors, which saw in this brownfield site a

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<sup>162</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Ladas, 09/07/2015.

potentially strategic area to be regenerated according to their economic, yet often conflictual, interests. In order to meet the needs and aspirations of such actors, the 2011 GUP envisaged the conversion of the whole area into a business park, through the redevelopment of the abandoned factories and the creation of green areas and promenades along the railway line (Pappas, Dimas, and Tsekouras 2010a; see also Figure 34). However, the presence of antagonistic actors, the failure of past projects, and the burst of the economic crisis turned the common redevelopment of the area into an unrealistic project<sup>163</sup>.



**Figure 34: Proposal for the creation of a business park in the former industrial area of Patras (purple area).**  
Source: GUP of Patras (Law 358/2011).

The industrial grandiosity of the factories' recent past continuously intermingles with the repetitive and timeless present of migrant occupation and the bright future projected through ideas, designs, and plans, making the factories places “where spatial narratives meet up or form configurations, conjunctures of trajectories which have their own temporalities” (Massey 2005:139). When I arrived in Patras in January 2015, a group of about 50 Sudanese migrants had occupied the premises of Peiraiki-Patraiki, an enormous abandoned textile factory close to the southern entrance of the new port

<sup>163</sup> Semi-structured interview with Prof. Pappas, 03/02/2015.

(Figure 35). The company launched its operations in 1917 under the name Patraiki, in the context of the industrial development of Greece and the diversification from the agricultural production that characterised the earlier development of the region. After an initial phase of expansion, in 1932 the company merged with Peiraiki, creating what would have become one of Greece's largest industrial complexes. In the second post-war period, Peiraiki-Patraiki was an avant-garde textile group that employed more than 4,000 workers, generating a significant spin-off<sup>164</sup>. By the 1980s, the company had nine active plants in Greece<sup>165</sup> and employed more than 3,000 workers only in Patras, significantly relying on the port for the import of raw materials<sup>166</sup>. The worldwide relocation of productive activities and the company's substantial debts marked the fate of Peiraiki-Patraiki: after a failed governmental attempt to save it through the 1985 Industrial Reconstruction Organisation, the company closed down definitely in 1991<sup>167</sup> (Sarafopoulos 2008).



**Figure 35: The Peiraiki-Patraiki complex, behind the new port's external fences.**  
Source: Picture by the author, 14/03/2015.

Following the common thread that connects “the emancipatory struggles of all those who are peripheralized and oppressed by the specific geography of capitalism” (Soja 2011:74), Peiraiki-Patraiki epitomises the worldwide development of capitalist

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<sup>164</sup> <http://www.iandriopoulos.com/piraiki-patraiki-an-abandoned-history/> (Accessed 04/04/2018).

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Milionis, 23/03/2015.

<sup>167</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Sarafopoulos, 15/05/2015.

relations, with the transition of western economies to the service sector, the relocation of productive activities to developing countries, and the integration (and displacement) of labour force at global level (Overbeek 2002). During one of my visits to Peiraiki-Patraiki, A. N., a Sudanese migrant, accompanied me for a small tour around the factory. While walking, he told me that a couple of years earlier some other migrants had actually found pieces of documents and old bags certifying the import of cotton from Sudan, and specifically from his native region<sup>168</sup>. The company, in fact, used to operate a branch in Sudan, from which it also imported cotton for the Patras plant. With the dismissal of activities, its abandoned premises now host, quite ironically, Sudanese migrants, who see in the port the only way to escape the country.

In 2003, OLPa entered in possession of the area, in the attempt to reconvert the original productive purposes of the factory into new profitable services. The plan was to utilise some buildings as storage for port activities and to construct parking facilities for lorries; however, legal, economic, and logistical issues prevented the realisation of the project. Transferring storage activities for port uses in the complex of Peiraiki-Patraiki would have meant turning the urban land use into a port zone, with enormous bureaucratic efforts and strong political determination from the actors involved, among which the generally hostile municipality. Besides, special security measures should have applied: the HCG, which now operates only within the fences of the port, should have controlled those premises, increasing their staff and areas of competence. The ISPS Code should have applied to a wider area, making security controls more extensive and expensive. Eventually, creating service facilities for lorries would have created problems of traffic and pollution along Akti Dimaion, an area already densely populated and congested<sup>169</sup>. In the vastness of this abandoned factory, migrants have constructed their temporary shelter, in hopes of leaving Greece soon towards more hospitable and desirable European destinations.

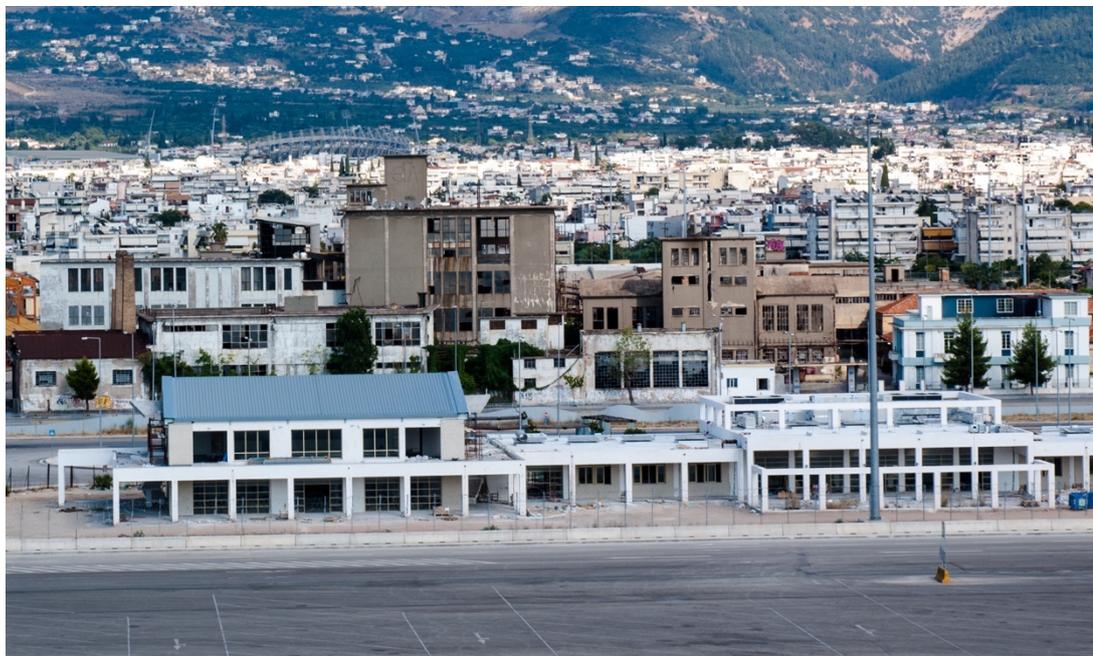
Affected by the 1980s de-industrialisation process, a similar destiny occurred to the paper mill Ladopoulos (Figure 36), a vast industrial complex located in front of the northern exit of the new port. The paper mill started its operations in 1928, benefitting from the proximity with both the sea and the railway line for the deployment of its activities. After WWII, the pulp industry, together with the textile and the chemical sectors, expanded eminently, attracting labour force from the whole

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<sup>168</sup> Field notes, 14/06/2015.

<sup>169</sup> Semi-structured interview with OLPa Director of Development, 15/05/2015.

region – which since the 1920s had populated the contiguous areas behind the coastal road – and driving its industrial development<sup>170</sup>. However, the enormous debts with the National Bank submerged the company, which, despite governmental interventions, folded in 1991 (Sarafopoulos 2008).



**Figure 36: The paper mill Ladopoulos (brown building), behind the port area.**  
Source: Picture by the author, 08/08/2015.

A few years later, the municipality of Patras acquired its premises, with the objective of redeveloping the entire coastal area in view of the 2006 European Capital of Culture. According to the original plans, the area, located just in front of the northern exit of the new port, should have become the new entrance to the city when the harbour had entered into function. Within this project, European and national funds financed the construction of a theatre, which nonetheless closed only a few years after the inaugural events due to non-compliance with international standards and major constructive problems<sup>171</sup>. At the main entrance in Akti Dimaion, an old building has been renovated and now hosts administrative offices, with municipal employees and private citizens continuously coming and going from the front gate. Awaiting new ideas and funding, the rest of the company's premises lay in decay, squatted by a group of 40 Afghan migrants of Tajik ethnicity who occupy its empty spaces.

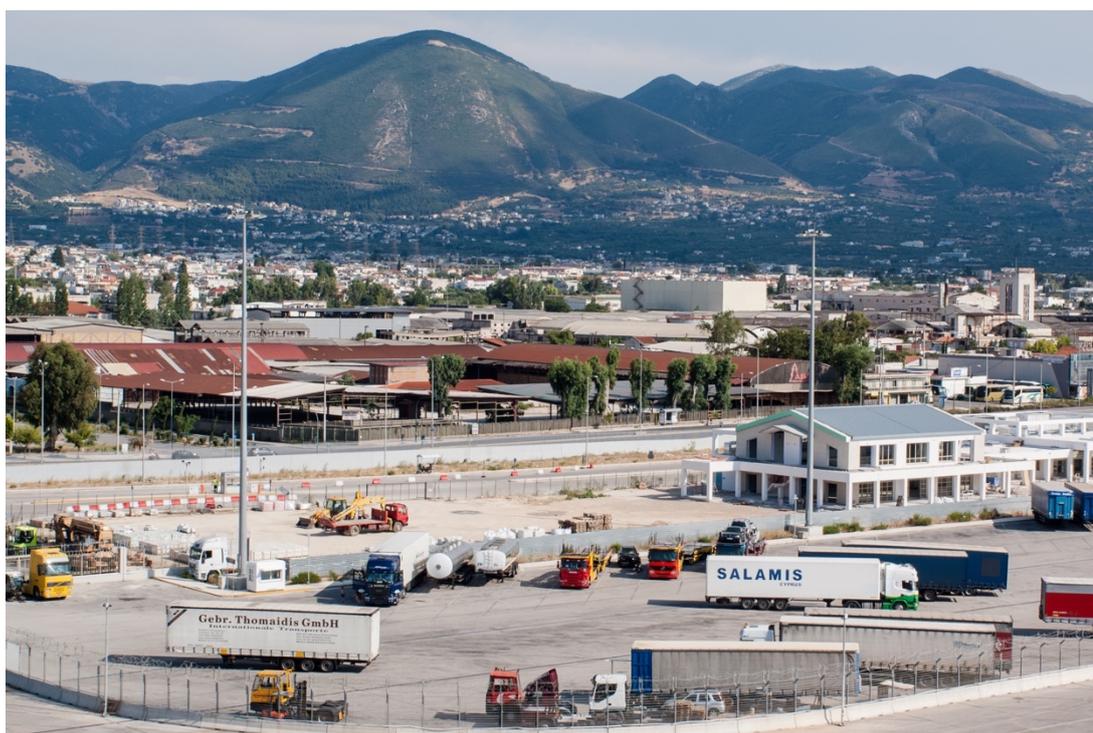
Halfway along the external fences of the new port, at the crossroad between the coastal road Akti Dimaion and Anthias Road, the wood factory AVEX (Figure 37)

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<sup>170</sup> Semi-structured interviews with Prof. Tsekouras, 22/04/2015, and Mr Sarafopoulos, 15/05/2015.

<sup>171</sup> Semi-structured interview with Prof. Pappas, 26/05/2015.

hosts a group of about 60 Hazara Afghans. Born in the 1920s, the company expanded progressively, constituting a smaller yet thriving industry during the second post-war reconstruction. In the 1980s, AVEX relocated its production activities to the new industrial area of Patras, about 20 km south of the city centre, leaving in the plant along Akti Dimaion only warehouses and sales facilities. Following inheritance problems, in 2010 the company ceased its operations<sup>172</sup>. Its premises now belong to a bank, which does not show any signs of refurbishment or redevelopment projects of the area. Afghan migrants have turned those empty spaces into their settlement, launching their daily challenge to the European border and migration regime.



**Figure 37: The former wood factory AVEX (with red and brown roofs).**  
Source: Picture by the author, 08/08/2015.

Unlike the other two complexes, the wood factory AVEX occupies a relatively circumscribed area, but its premises are completely surrounded by wood gates that hinder the access of extraneous vehicles or bodies, marking a clear distinction between inner and outer spaces and, therefore, providing more effective defence mechanisms from outside pitfalls (Grohmann 2015). The main gate in Anthias Road is permanently shut, leaving only a narrow side passage that guarantees the entrance, strictly on foot, to the premises. Likewise, few openings through the wood gate along the coastal road, combined with the presence of concealed passages on the back leading to the railway line, allow migrants to come and go rather quickly and unnoticed from the factory,

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<sup>172</sup> See note 167.

especially in case of police intrusions. Specific circumstances might nevertheless trigger the need for more protection against external intrusions: following the suicide of an Afghan migrant in Ladopoulos in late April 2015 and the subsequent police inspections inside the other factories, migrants felt the urge to reinforce the main entrance, in order to prevent police vehicles to burst abruptly again into it<sup>173</sup>.

Whereas nationality and ethnicity seem to constitute powerful organising forces inside the factories, in the dilapidated premises of VESO B these forces are subverted, and migrants from different backgrounds gather and relate to each other, creating an extroverted place where people, ideas, and networks merge and interact (Massey 1993, 2005; see also Cresswell 2009, 2011). Founded in 1930, the VESO complex used to produce industrial oils, soaps, and wines in two different plants along Akti Dimaion: VESO A, located in front of the newly renovated park, and VESO B, in the proximity of the southern entrance of the new port. The former ceased its operations in 1985, while employing 180 workers (Christopoulou 2016). In the framework of the tertiarisation of the European and Greek economies, in the spring of 1998 the company ELSAP purchased the premises of the company, dismantled the building, and began the construction of a shopping mall with a multiplex cinema and complementary activities<sup>174</sup>. In 2005, VESO B followed the same pattern. The premises of the building now belong to the Greek transport company KTEL, which bought the area with the aim of creating an intermodal station to let people, trucks, and tourists leave the city directly through the bypass, in view of the completion of the new port<sup>175</sup>. The project, however, looks far from being realised: the whole area is in a state of neglect and re-appropriated by Sudanese and Afghan migrants for communal recreational activities, superseding national and ethnic divisions.

The destruction of the physical boundaries of the factory, which makes the place relatively accessible from/to the outside, seems to have brought similar repercussions on the cognitive boundaries within its premises, reconstituted and renegotiated through the everyday practices of migrants (Lykogianni and Vaiou 2007; see also J. W. Scott and Sohn 2018). Beset by Peiraiki-Patraiki, the crosscutting railway line and the coastal road, the premises of VESO B are completely razed to the ground (Figure 38). The external walls of the factory, with a couple of large openings through it, and a decaying structure in the middle of its open-space are the only visible remains of this

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<sup>173</sup> Field notes, 02/05/2015.

<sup>174</sup> See note 167.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

former industrial site. Weeds and scrubs have infested the whole place, replacing most of the crumbling concrete floors. Given the absence of roofing, establishing a permanent shelter is unfeasible; however, Sudanese and Afghan migrants have reconstructed their everyday through parleying, playing, and praying, creating an intermingled network of relations and connections that traverses national and ethnic differences (Massey 1993; 2005).



**Figure 38: The internal area of VESO B.** Some remnants of dilapidated walls are visible around it. On the background, the tower of Peiraiki-Patraiki. Source: Picture by the author, 05/08/2015.

After a period of decay and neglect, the abandoned factories along Akti Dimaion have turned again into animated places, alive with a multiplicity of symbols, meanings, and trajectories (Massey 1994, 2005). Profiting from the failure of urban redevelopment projects, migrants have transformed the factories into their own – albeit temporary and precarious – living place, negotiating their physical and political presence within the urban setting. Through the daily challenge against the border, migrants have advanced powerful political requests and reclaimed their freedom of movement, eschewing the intricate logics of bordering directed to control and police their bodies (De Genova, Garelli, and Tazzioli 2018). In so doing, they have subverted the European border and migration regime, which necessitates docile and governed subjects capable to abide

by the dispositions of selection, control, and in/exclusion performed through the CEAS. This is precisely what will be discussed in the next section.

### 6.3 Redrawing mobilities

#### *Differential admissions: class and social relations*

The geopolitical specificities of Patras in the regional and European network made its port/border area a crossroad of variegated mobilities, continuously intersecting and overlapping: the mobility of lorries, regulated by the strict timetable of the ferryboats and the even stricter requirements of the just-in-time systems of production and distribution (Cowen 2010, 2014; Martin 2013); the mobility of capital, flowing into and reconfiguring spaces in accordance with the imperatives of accumulation and profitability (Harvey 2001); the mobility of passengers, physically and emotionally protected by safe and well recognisable routes (Martin 2011a, 2011b; see also Bauman 1995); the mobility of inhabitants, readapting space to their needs and exigencies without nonetheless subverting it; and the (often invisible or hidden) mobility of migrants, attempting to infiltrate and disrupt the flows and networks that capitalism creates, forging alternative spatial cartographies (Garelli, Sossi, and Tazzioli 2015; Tazzioli 2015b).

The different, superimposing, and at times contrasting mobilities cannot be conceived but in relation with, and influencing, each other (Adey 2006; Martin 2012). Unlike the unfettered mobility of capital, freights, and travellers, facilitated through logistical and geopolitical developments, migrants' mobility has been increasingly regulated, curtailed or securitised, prolonging their journeys to and through Europe (Martin 2011a, 2011b, 2012; Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). Whereas lorry drivers, tourists, and passengers are usually dismissed after few seconds at the security checks, reducing their temporal constraints to a minimum, migrants can be stuck in Greece for months or years, compelled to find and open up new breaches in the mutable geography of mobility.

Although *prima facie* less visible, power and class relations massively shape migration patterns among different types of passengers, as well as among migrants in the factories. The possibility to mobilise economic and social capitals affects not only the initial choice of migrating, but also the journey that migrants can undertake and the destinations they can reach, redrawing the transnational geopolitics of mobility (De Haas 2007, 2008). As subtly acknowledged even by international organisations

and agencies (Murrugarra, Larrison, and Sasin 2010; see also IOM 2017a, 2017b; UNHCR 2017), class and the variegated and convertible forms of capital underlying it can provide an important analytical tool to disassemble the differential mobility of migrants (Van Hear 2004, 2014; see also Hansen and Zechner 2017). Retracing the socio-economic relations behind migration movements does not simply mean investigating the push and pull factors that regulate mobilities between countries of origin and destination; rather, it also enables capturing the various “power-geometries” (Massey 1993) of migrant agency in relation to their flows and movements.

The combination of economic resources and social connections that migrants can mobilise appears particularly apt to elucidate why Patras has become a transit hub along the migration journey to Europe, as well as to disclose class divergences among migrants themselves. For those migrants who struggle to find additional socio-economic capitals, Patras represents a necessary stopover among the “hierarchy of destinations that can be reached by migrants, according to the resources – economic and network based – that they can call upon” (Van Hear 2014:111). In the words of an Afghan migrant, Greece was indeed the furthest destination he could reach, with the financial endowment at his disposal: “from Afghanistan to Iran, I paid \$500. From Iran to Turkey and from Turkey to Greece, I paid about \$1000 every time. Now, my money has finished, I try to go... [pointing at the port]”<sup>176</sup>.

Yet, Patras is not merely a fortuitous destination for migrants directed to northern Europe but the result of a process of production and circulation of a specific knowledge that has been developed across borders and bequeathed through time (Rai 2003; Tazzioli 2015b). In some cases, migrants obtain such knowledge once they arrive in Greece, through a capillary network of friends, relatives, or casual acquaintances. According to an Afghan migrant, “When I was in the hotel<sup>177</sup>, the host said that there was a border, and its name was Patras. He also said that, if I wanted to, I could have gone from Patras to other countries”<sup>178</sup> (see Fidan 2009). This knowledge of mobility, however, has also travelled in space and time, influencing migrants’ decisions and strategies since their countries of origin (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013; Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles 2015). As a Sudanese migrant told me,

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<sup>176</sup> Semi-structured interview with A. R., Afghanistan, 30/05/2015.

<sup>177</sup> What he called hotel was actually a flat in Athens that Afghan migrants could rent for €3-4 per night. The place, managed by an Afghan person, could host about 20-25 people.

<sup>178</sup> Semi-structured interview with J. H., Afghanistan, 13/06/2015.

“Everyone knows about Patras: we come here to go to Italy by ship under the truck. You sneak under the truck; the truck goes inside the ferryboat; the ferryboat takes you to Italy; from Italy, you can go to France; and from there you could go wherever you want (chuckling). ... I have known Patras for more than ten years: this route is well known since the past”<sup>179</sup>.

*Differential escapes: claiming the “right to mobility”*

In a relational and dialectical manner, mobility and immobility are continuously reshaped through the (non)availability of economic capital, which simultaneously inspires migrants’ journey and destination, as well as their circulation around Greece (Adey 2006; Franquesa 2011). Financial distress can prevent migrant from continuing their journey through well-known but more expensive routes. According to different reconstructions, the Balkan route would have involved the use of smugglers and could have required up to €3-4,000, drawing imperceptible lines of class and power between migrants. The partial opening of the borders during summer 2015 caused a reduction in fares, although not in the dangers associated with it: “If you want to go through Macedonia [North Macedonia, author’s note], you need to travel with a group of people; you cannot go alone”<sup>180</sup>, in order to ensure them more protection in case of attacks from prowlers. Despite the temporary elimination of smuggling networks, migrants would need to bear the cost of transports and basic food provisions along the way, which could still represent a fortune for many of them. For a Sudanese migrant, aware of alternative ways to leave Greece but lacking the necessary resources to proceed with his journey, Patras remained the only viable option: “If you do not have money, you are forced to sneak under a truck and trying your chance to escape”<sup>181</sup>.

On the contrary, the possibility to mobilise socio-economic resources in a prompt and secure way could not only partially relieve the difficult living conditions within the factories, but also determine migrants’ outward mobility, thus reproducing class and power differentiations among migrants (De Haas 2007, 2008). When I asked an Afghan migrant how dwellers in the factory usually subsist, he replied,

“Some of them have brothers in Europe; some others get money from their families in their countries of origin. As for me, I have two or three friends in Sweden, which sent me money here. When I finish my money, I just call them,

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<sup>179</sup> Semi-structured interview with O. S., Sudan, 12/06/2015.

<sup>180</sup> Semi-structured interview with A. H., Afghanistan, 26/06/2015.

<sup>181</sup> Semi-structured interview with A. A. I., Sudan, 01/06/2015.

and they send me money through Western [Union]; so, I go there to take the money”<sup>182</sup>.

As Tilly argues (2007:5), “Trust networks play central parts in the organization, maintenance, and transformation of long-distance migration streams across much of the world”. The more extensive the social network is and the tighter the trust relationships within it are, the higher the possibilities to receive financial support are (*ibid.*:7). Disputing the conventional idea of migrants sending financial resources to their countries of origin through remittances (see Kara 2016), an Afghan migrant thus described his situation: “if you know any friend from another European country, he might also send you some money, so as to live by for a month or so... people know about the situation here. Sometimes, you don’t even need to ask them for money, they just give it to you”<sup>183</sup>.

Those who can rely on the support of familial or social relations can elude the spatio-temporal immobility in which migrants are often relegated inside the factories, accelerating their real or imagined journey across the border. The present materiality of the border, with its tangible fences and widespread controls that guarantee the just-in-time circulation of commodities and lorry drivers, commingles with a forward-looking imaginary of mobility, producing multiple and intersecting border temporalities (Donnan, Hurd, and Leutloff-Grandits 2017). After having spent two years in Greece and slowly running out of his financial resources, an Afghan migrant was confident that the incoming contribution from his family and friends would have allowed him to go towards the northern border<sup>184</sup>. Another Afghan migrant even suspended his daily attempts to cross the port fences until he had received some financial support from his family. In his case, the possibility to obtain economic resources acquired a symbolic meaning, fulfilling – at least in his mind – his longstanding desire of reaching Italy. In fact, he would have not used the money to pay for smuggling networks, but rather to survive in Italy for some days once he had disembarked in the country<sup>185</sup>.

Escaping Greece, however, remains a difficult task, and the permanence in the country increases the risks of being detained and deported, annihilating migrants’ imagination. An Afghan migrant simply but efficaciously illustrated the contradictory

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<sup>182</sup> Semi-structured interview with M. T., Afghanistan, 03/05/2015.

<sup>183</sup> Semi-structured interview with A. M., Sudan, 09/05/2015.

<sup>184</sup> Informal conversation an Afghan migrant, 14/07/2015.

<sup>185</sup> Informal interview with A., Afghanistan, 28/07/2015.

character of the European border regime: “They [the police and the Greek authorities] invite you to leave the country, but they don’t let you go”<sup>186</sup>. Given the stricter security measures of the new port, some migrants are compelled to immobility for months or even years: chance would thus overlap the already complex and dynamic relationships that compose social capital (Claridge 2004). When I questioned him about the presence of longstanding migrants in the factory, another Afghan migrant replied that leaving or remaining is only a question of good fortune: “It does not matter how much time you spend here, it is just a question of chance”<sup>187</sup> (see also Courau 2003).

The settlements respond precisely to the manifold necessities of migrants, claiming their “right to space, whilst simultaneously enacting a right to ‘not-settle,’ a right to *mobility*” (Hole 2012:51, emphasis in original). Rejecting the “calmed stillness of settlement and belonging” (Martin 2011a:205), the temporary presence of migrants is rather an inflicted “static state filled with vibratory motion” (Stewart 2007:19), a forced break ready to be broken at any time to resume the journey towards the rest of Europe. As the provisional nature of migrant settlements turned into a state of legal and socio-economic “permanent temporariness” (Bailey et al. 2002), migrants became increasingly dependent “on *actual* forms of illegality” (Martin 2011a:194) as essential tactics to secure their presence and simultaneously continue their clandestine and perilous journey. Active contestations of the restrictive dispositions of the European border regime, the establishment of makeshift settlements and the employment of unconventional tactics of border crossing have made migrant claims for freedom of movement forcefully perceptible at national and European scale.

The macro- and micro-level analysis of the variegated routes and transports provides another fruitful angle to look at the differential mobility of migrants, opening up new relational ways of contemplating (im)mobility, (in)visibility, and (non)existence. Drawing from the work of Virilio on the violence of speed, Craig Martin (2011b) argues that, in the context of increasing acceleration dominating the current phase of neoliberal globalisation, undocumented migrants are deprived of the possibility to decide on the modalities of their own mobility, thus being forced to parasitically infiltrate transport networks and utilise alternative and dangerous routes that are not designed for corporeal mobilities. In the approaching and unfolding of the journey, invisibility acquires a paramount importance, as it allows migrants to eschew

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<sup>186</sup> Informal interview with A. S., Afghanistan, 27/07/2015.

<sup>187</sup> Informal conversation with A. S., Afghanistan, 06/08/2015.

the threatening assemblage of security measures that controls and protects the commodity network (see also Cowen 2010, 2014).

Martin does not simply analyse the vulnerable mobility of migrants, but he also places it in relation to the safe and protected mobility of the cosmopolitan citizen, disclosing the inherently violent character of speed. The travel of the “legitimated passengers” is enclosed within a protective capsule – whether it be the cabin of an airplane, the carriage of a train or the passenger compartment of a vehicle – that separates them from the accelerated violence of contemporary speed culture, transforming them into “sedentary nomads” (De Cauter 2001:122). In the comfort of the ferryboat journey, passengers can indeed relax and enjoy a drink in the common areas, have a quick dip into the open-air swimming pool, or appreciate some privacy in the solitude of their cabins, unaware of the potential presence of “bodies folded in migrant crypts” (Galis, Tzokas, and Tympas 2016; see also Chu 2016) hidden in the restricted area of the garages.

In his elaboration of the concept of “viapolitics” as a critical way of thinking about migration politics, William Walters (2015b) goes one step further in the analysis of the intertwining relations among migration, mobility, and power, conferring central importance to the role of vehicles, roads, and routes as productive sites of politics and struggles. Departing from a relational and contextual approach to mobilities, Walters eschews a mere analysis of the differential mobility of legitimated and illegitimated passengers, overturning the conceptualisation of migrants as “desperate mobilities” (see Martin 2012). Given their power to influence the public understanding of migration, Walters (2015b:473-474) proposes to conceive vehicles and their infrastructures as “mobile zones of governance and contestation in their own right”, yet capable of becoming “the objects and settings of political action”.

Like mobile passengers, vehicles have become the target of securitisation measures, especially in crucial articulations like ports, which need to guarantee a constant degree of circulation with relatively efficient security standards (see also Heyman 2004). Exploiting its vast spaces and numerous cabins, the ferryboat itself can sometimes be used as a carrier for the forced deportation of those migrants apprehended in Italian ports and summarily returned to Greece (see Stierl 2014; MEDU 2013), removed from the sight of holidaymakers and lorry drivers that usually populate it. Combining recreational, business, and carceral spaces, the ferryboat

appears as the locus where multiple processes of bordering intersect, reproducing the differential in/exclusion of mobile people within mobile carriers.

As vehicles and ships turn into border zones, Walters continues, migrants hone their knowledge about travelling, the advantages or risks connected to certain routes, the price of smuggling networks, and the tactics to fall through the cracks of surveillance system and police checks (Martin 2012; Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos 2016). Rather than passively succumbing to the multifarious assemblage of apparatuses of control, migrants have developed and put in practice a myriad of “acts of refusal, escape and trespass” (Walters 2015b:483; see also R. Jones 2012) to fulfil their dreams and reach their destinations, redrawing their own cartographies of mobility.

Such acts occur through other, often hidden and imperceptible, forms of re-appropriation that involve not only the spatial materiality of vehicles and streets, but also more impalpable, yet no less complex or contradictory, corporeal and mental imaginaries. In juxtaposition with the spectacularised scene of the border regime (De Genova 2012b, 2013b), migrants have clandestinely occupied, through their bodies and minds, those empty and unused but strategically crucial spaces, turning them into vital links along the chain that connects their protracted and extenuating journey to Europe (see Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008).

#### *Differential mobilities: dominating bodies*

The aforementioned occupation of abandoned buildings has proceeded *pari passu* with the spatial and mental re-appropriation of the surrounding roads and the adjacent railway line, producing alternative urban mapping that endeavours to ensnare migrants’ “relational imbrication of stillness and movements” (Martin 2011a:192). The maze of hidden passages and shortcuts that depart and ramify from the factories, and the rear connections through the disused railway line, often inaccessible to other vehicles, have translated into hidden paths that allow migrants to escape promptly from police chases or reach other factories without being noticed and stopped.

The spatial re-appropriation of roads and passages acquires fundamental importance in case of individual defence or escape from the daily pursuits and intrusions of the police, as well as for enacting collective offence to access to the port area. The different location of the factories along the coastal road results in the elaboration and enhancement of various, more or less successful, tactics to cross the

external fences or to sneak under a lorry. On any given day, the occupiers of Peiraiki-Patraiki remain hidden behind the dustbins in front of the southern entrance of the port, until lorries stop at the traffic light and they briskly dash off in the attempt to crawl underneath them. Migrants in the other two factories, instead, often gather together, waiting for the timeliest moment to scatter in small groups, jump the fences, and quickly find their way into the bellies of the lorries queueing at the security checks. In some cases, the control of logistical accesses to the main streets and the port area generates conflicts among migrants themselves, especially when smuggling networks and facilitators were involved (Lafazani 2013).

The process of spatial re-appropriation extends to the micro level, entailing the physical and mental control of one's own body, the capability to disguise it and make it invisible to the alert glance of the officer (Galis, Tzokas, and Tympas 2016). In the everyday ritual of border crossing, body performance acquires a crucial importance: the body should conceal uncertainties and camouflage imperfections, or it might betray the migrant (Khosravi 2008). The darkness and dirtiness of their clothes constitute a deceptive subterfuge that offers migrants a better protection during the security checks, making them less visible when hiding inside lorries or during their night attacks towards the port area (Hole 2012). One hot summer day, after having lunched altogether, migrants at AVEX suddenly spread away, in preparation to approach the port area. One of them walked away to change his clothes, putting a dark grey sweater on top of his t-shirt, and a pair of greasy tracksuit trousers over his short ones, to better disguise himself under the dingy bellies of the lorries<sup>188</sup>.

The body itself must be trained, rendered fit for running to and from the port area and flexible enough to slide underneath lorries and enter into its cramped spaces (Galis, Tzokas, and Tympas 2016). As capitalism tends to dominate and monetise space through the containerisation of trade (Cowen 2014; Easterling 2014) and the implementation of a differential politics of comfort for passengers (Chu 2016), undocumented migrants re-appropriate the empty crypts and interstices left unused or destined to the transportation of non-human materials: their bodies "function as the eruption of embodied labor into the spaces of free trade" (Connell 2012:7; see also Galis, Tzokas, and Tympas 2016).

In this respect, biological time and physical conditions generate differentiated patterns of mobility that condition migrants' everyday life and their actual possibility

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<sup>188</sup> Field notes, 18/07/2015.

to migrate. Elderly, corpulent, or crippled bodies are temporarily or permanently excluded from the daily “border game”, producing gendered distinctions among migrants themselves (see Vaiou 2012; Andrijasevic 2003). As border crossing connotes a hazardous and vigorous activity that only healthy young men can carry out, those who are unable to perform it undergo an implicit victimisation and a potential aggravation of their legal status, which could turn into a personal sense of culpability and failure. As the pain on his already swollen knee intensified following a ruinous fall from the port fences, an Afghan migrant expressed his grave disappointment for the temporary impossibility to partake in the daily attempts to leave the country, with consequent repercussions not only on his changing legal situation, but also on his future chances to economically support his family from Europe<sup>189</sup>.

*Differential imaginaries: reinventing languages, redrawing mobilities*

Just as any process of physical domination over space cannot occur without having been previously conceived and visualised in the mental schemes of urban planners and architects (Schmid 2008), so the re-appropriation of one’s own body cannot properly take place without a simultaneous resolute self-control over one’s mind. It is from the mind, in fact, that nerves and senses depart to comprehend and dominate the body, regulate its movements, and grasp its immediate surrounding area, in order to acknowledge and seize it (Lefebvre 1991; Brenner and Elden 2009). The most direct instrument to perceive, decode, and command reality is language: through language, every person may “establish... the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home” (Foucault 1994:xx).

Migrants re-appropriate surrounding objects and everyday activities by giving them a particular unique name, (re)inventing the language and subverting its significance. “We don’t speak English, Farsi or Greek, but only the language of how to go under a truck”, an Afghan migrant once told me when I approached and introduced myself to a group of young men at the Ladopoulos factory<sup>190</sup>. The first word that I stumbled upon in this bottom-up dictionary is “dingle”, which came to signify either the axle of the lorry where migrants hang from or, more generally, the act itself of sneaking and hiding underneath it. In one case, the term also stood out as

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<sup>189</sup> Informal interview with O., Afghanistan, 29/07/2015.

<sup>190</sup> Informal conversation, 10/07/2015.

a nickname for one of the migrants, the most determined among the group in performing such activity, or in “doing the dingle”.

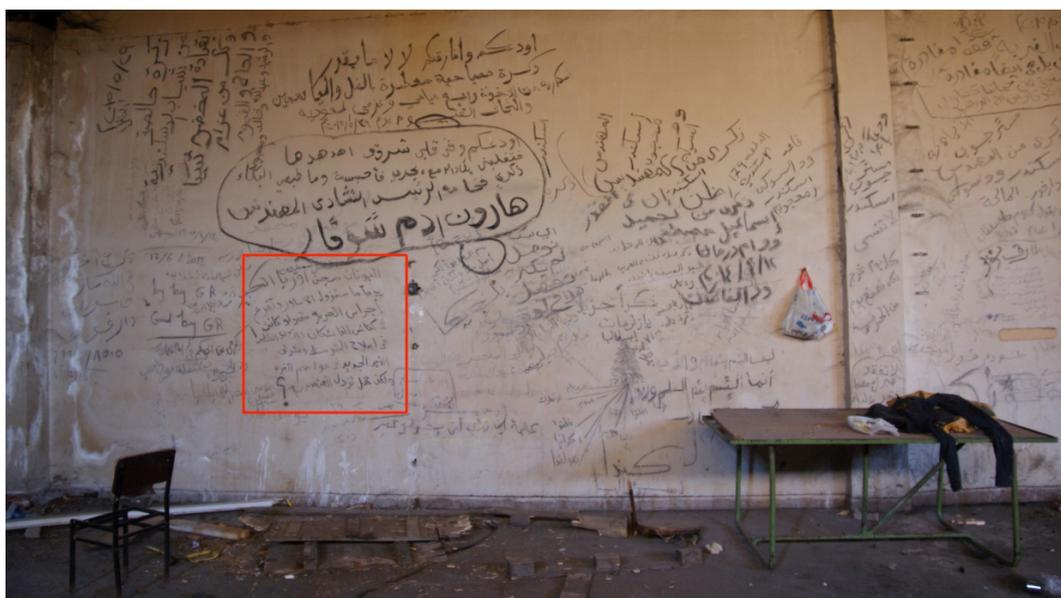
Like every language, even the migrant language is subject to synchronous divergences among groups and diachronic alterations through time, attesting the “extraordinary ‘mobility’ of words” so peculiar in tumultuous or radical situations (Gandolfi 2013:21). The word “dingle” acquired a specific meaning especially among Sudanese migrants, while Afghans did not have a particular word at the time to describe that activity. Another ethnographic research conducted some years earlier (Hole 2012:30) noticed that, in conjunction with the already popular term “dingle”, migrants’ “daily attempts to leave are termed their ‘work’, chasing after trucks at strategic points near the port and the main roads”. In 2017, other migrants were instead referring to the same practice as “the game”, as if a full-time essential occupation turned into a recreational, even entertaining activity<sup>191</sup>, reminding of Andersson’s account of hunters and preys (2014b; see also Clementi 2018).

The reinvention of language is not the only instrument that migrants employ to familiarise with or to re-appropriate the everyday. Graffiti and writings also acquire great significance, embodying migrants’ sense of disaffection for the inhuman conditions in which they are forced to live. The factories and their walls become places where migrants express their resentment against the violence of the European border and migration regime, developing a “significant therapeutic potential as a mode of response to trauma and issues of identity negotiation” (Hanauer 2004:33).

In this respect, Greece is often described as a prison where migrants are stuck, waiting for their chance to escape. A Sudanese migrant once accompanied me around the huge abandoned complex of Peiraiki-Patraiki to show me some of the writings, mostly in Arabic, they (and other migrants before him) had drawn on the walls. With his help in translating it, one tag, dated 17/06/2012, recited: “Greece is a big prison of the European Union / One day the chains will be cut / and the bells of freedom will ring even in the Vatican Church. / The dangers will end in the Mediterranean salt / and the new morning will rise in the western cities. / But the important question is: will racism end?” (Figure 39).

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<sup>191</sup> Informal conversation with an Afghan migrant, 18/09/2017.



**Figure 39: One of the rooms inside a warehouse in Peiraiki-Patraiki. Highlighted in red, the poem that some migrants had written on the wall. Source: picture by the author, 14/06/2015.**

As grief and sorrow make way for anger and restlessness, graffiti turn into symbols of resistance against the dominant urban containers in which migrants are spatially and temporally confined (C. L. Anderson 2012). The journey towards Italy and the rest of Europe is depicted as a liberation, the termination of the despicable conditions in Patras, and in Greece more generally, and the obtainment of the long-awaited emancipation. “Suffer, but don’t give up, because freedom will be priceless”, proclaimed another graffiti in Peiraiki-Patraiki (see Figure 40). The idea of, or rather the longing for, leaving Greece is a recurrent theme in both writings and drawings. While he was guiding me outside, the Sudanese migrant showed me some other small inscription on the external wall and in the outdoor columns which, according to his translation, simply declaimed, “I just want to go out from Greece”, exhorting refugees to sneak under the lorry and escape.

Rather than being mere products of a rebellious urban subculture or visible-yet-illegal practices through which enacting “the right to rewrite the city” (Zieleniec 2016; see also Iveson 2011; Bengsten and Arvidsson 2014), migrant graffiti “re-scale[s] border space and thereby re-capture a sense of belonging by those whose roles are marginalised by national politics and the neoliberal global economy” (Madsen 2015:95). Such re-scaling operates at the level of the body and the intimate, afflicted by the everyday bordering violence, and extends to the transnational level, opening up a myriad of imaginary spaces and networks that can materialise at any time (Toenjes 2015). Through individual and collective acts of imagination, migrants have re-drawn

the cartographies of their mobility and defied the dominant apparatus of the port/border area of Patras, creating real or mental alternative ways to escape the country.



**Figure 40: Writings in Peiraiki-Patraiki.**  
Source: Picture by the author, 15/03/2015.

The location of graffiti – enclosed within the factories’ walls – prevents a widespread socio-spatial visibility (cp. Al-Mousawi 2015); yet, their politically contentious nature emerges clearly among external visitors (Waldner and Dobratz 2013). References to borders and border crossings often actualise in the numerous writings and poems disseminated in the common areas. In another building of Peiraiki-Patraiki, located near the entrance and perhaps once used as office block, a popular Sudanese musician, Mostafa Sid Ahmed, is depicted together with the lines of one of his songs, in Arabic, which a Sudanese migrant thus translated: “We are with birds, and birds don’t know borders, because they don’t have neither maps nor passports”. Similarly, on the walls of one of the edifices in the abandoned wood factory AVEX, one of the writings, in Farsi and translated by one of the migrants, says, “If anyone is afraid, he can cross the border” (see Figure 41).



**Figure 41: Writings in one of the AVEX abandoned edifices.**  
 Source: Picture by the author, 03/04/2015.

The theme of the journey acquires more clear and discernible contours in some of the drawings scattered around the factories. Sketches of ships and lorries cover the walls in at least three different common areas, often accompanied by sticky figures in their attempt to sneak under their bellies. According to Brown, Brunelle and Malhotra (2017) the use of graffiti exemplifies a symbolic rite of passage for adolescents as part of their psychological growth process. Likewise, in the factories such illustrations are filled with rituals and traditional practices, disclosing nonetheless migrants' ambitions to breach tangible passages along the Adriatic route. Drawings of lorries are sometimes surrounded by the names and dates of those who actually managed to cross the border, or had attempted to, as a way to exorcise the life-threatening journey and instil courage among the future travellers. During one of my first visits to Peiraiki-Patraiki, at some point one of the migrants stood up from the circle of fellows where he was having a conversation, went to the makeshift fireside, and took a firebrand. When he came back, he wrote his name on the top of the lorry, followed by an arrow and the destination: Italia (Figure 42). Today, it was his chance to arrive to Italy, "inshallah"<sup>192</sup> (see also Courau 2003).

<sup>192</sup> Informal conversation with T., Saudi Arabia, 14/03/2015.

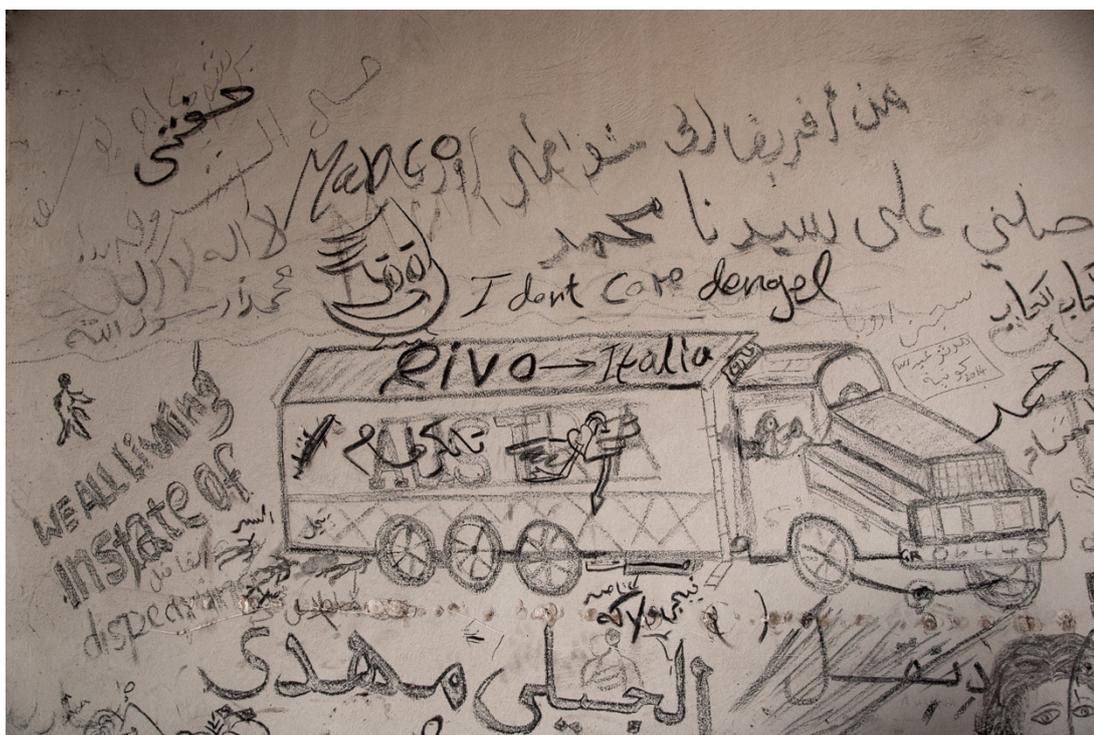


Figure 42: A lorry drawn on the walls of Peiraiki-Patraiki.  
Source: Picture by the author, 15/03/2015.

In another case, the lorry is depicted as a means of transport among the many that migrants have used, or will have to use, in order to reach Italy (see Figure 43). The lorry becomes part of a vaster network chain, tracing a hypothetical journey through a borderless map, with few arrows indicating the direction towards Italy. However, the representation of the lorry as a locus and medium of freedom not only risks transforming into a site of detention and death, but also necessarily collides with the conventional conception of the lorry as a carrier in the regional distribution of freight across the Adriatic Sea (see Al-Mousawi 2015). Just as TEN-T maps project the European dream of a single market, connecting the whole European space through a common transportation network, so migrants' graffiti convey their desire to tear down borders, enacting their "right to the ferryboat" (Spathopoulou 2016). Although similar in scope, the two cartographies inevitably clash (Casas-Cortes et al. 2017), disclosing the differential mobilities and degrees of inclusion within Europe (see De Genova 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012). Whereas the TEN-T maps lay the foundation for a borderless Europe to guarantee the unrestrained mobility of capitals, goods, services and people, migrants' maps create their own alternative and disruptive spatial imaginaries, which jeopardise the multifarious "operations of capital" (Mezzadra and Neilson 2015) and subvert the "regime of representation" in which migrants are often confined (Tazzioli 2015b:4).



**Figure 43: Lorries and boats depicted on the walls of Peiraiki-Patraiki.**  
 Source: Picture by the author, 14/06/2015.

In the port/border area of Patras, a multiplicity of variegated mobilities continuously intersects, producing overlapping trajectories and conflictual patterns. Whether through ideal representations conveying their willingness to escape or through the materiality of everyday practices, migrants have enacted their right for “non-settling” (Hole 2012), forging their own – potentially disruptive – spatio-temporal mobilities. Their daily attempts to leave the country, considered as a threat to the regular mobility of authorised flows through the port, have led to the strengthening of the mechanisms of policing, detention, and deportation of undocumented migrants, precluding any possibility for their potential establishment and regularisation in the Hellenic country. Despite the police crackdowns and the opposition of local residents and authorities, Patras has arguably remained a transit place for several migrants, attracted by the possibility of continuing their journey and reaching other European countries through its port.

#### **6.4 Negotiating identities**

##### *External conflicts: securitarian vs. humanitarian practices*

In her ethnographic research on squatting and homelessness in London, Steph Grohmann (2015:100) argues that, “home is not so much a place as it is a process, the continuous approximation of something and thus an on-going project of becoming”.

Even if squatting in the UK is to a certain degree tolerated and regulated, she continues, social blemish, security concerns, and bureaucratic issues might always jeopardise the precarious stability of informal accommodations. For this reason, “‘Becoming at home’ ... implied a struggle, as the project of making oneself safe in the world required a confrontation with the social structures that prevented this from happening” (*ibid.*). The relentless process of “becoming at home” acquires particular gravity among migrants, where the volatile condition of the squatter intertwines with the temporary bureaucratic status of the migrant figure, creating liminal spaces of between-ness “intimately associated with personal moments and movements of transformation” (Noussia and Lyons 2009:619; cp. Ifekwunigwe 2016; Grohmann 2017). Drawing from the works of Bridget Anderson on the everyday bordering of migrants within social contexts, Grohmann argues that not only does the social construction of the migrant-squatter evoke social and economic problems related to the issue of squatting as a politico-survival practice contrasting the increasing gentrification of urban centres, but it also questions citizenship and legitimacy within the community, marking clear-cut distinctions between good and bad citizens. The figure of the migrant-squatter combines the categories of non-citizens and failed-citizen, portraying it as an invader “both of the state and of the home” (Grohmann 2017).

In Greece, the social representation of the migrant-squatter is further complicated by peculiar historical developments and personal experiences that arouse conflicting but strictly interconnected perceptions on migrants among local institutions and inhabitants. On the one hand, the strong and deep-rooted nationalist attachment that permeates Greek society has resonated not only with far-right political movements, but also with conservative parties and large strata of population, affecting the recent socio-political construction of the migrant figure as a temporary, irregular, yet necessary bearer of labour power (Kandylis 2006). On the other hand, the shared experiences of diaspora and “refugeeness” (Malkki 1995; Lacroix 2004) engender sympathetic feelings and practices of solidarity towards migrants among the native population. Usually connected to both the Greek emigration abroad and the forced return of Greek refugees from Turkey in the 1920s, these sentiments are considered to be still vivid in the national imagination, having involved a significant portion of the Greek population (Spinthourakis and Antonopoulou 2011).

This dichotomous representation of the migrant figure intersects with a series of political discourses and legal decisions that creates multiple layers of differentiation among them, constructing a “hierarchy of Greekness” around specific ethno-genealogical conceptions (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002). The initial presence of Kurdish migrants is emblematic in this respect, as it was imbued with more political than humanitarian inclinations (Papadopoulou 2003). Given the thorny diplomatic relations between Greece and Turkey, the Kurdish diaspora raised compassionate sentiments among locals: the Kurds were indeed considered and socially constructed as “enemies of our enemies”<sup>193</sup> by the whole political spectrum (*ibid.*). In some cases, political solidarity would emerge between migrants and the anarchist-autonomist group in Patras, in particular to denounce police violence at the border and in the streets (Mantanika 2009; Hole 2012). As political and spatial conflicts became more intense, evictions and police raids occurred with increased frequency. With the deteriorating relationships between the Turkish government and the Kurds, the HP arrested Kurdish migrants and demolished makeshift camps all over the country to avoid uprisings or protests (Papadopoulou 2003). Even the railway organization, from time to time, would clear the area of the station and seal the wagons<sup>194</sup>, forcing migrants to a constant state of restlessness.

With the expansion of the migrant settlement in the 2000s and the changes in its ethnic composition, the settlements acquired increasing spatial and political visibility, bringing the conflicts with neighbours and local institutions to a higher level. Drawing from the Rancièrian concept of the partition of the sensible, Peter Nyers (2010:130) argues that “the political community is also an aesthetic community... [inasmuch as it] orders and polices what is visible, what can be said, who can speak”. The aesthetic aspect of the political community consists precisely in maintaining visible a certain dominant discourse, by “governing the circulation of appearances, of their visibility and audibility, and the proper distribution of bodies therein” (Panagia 2009:299). Through the calculated distinction between the visible and the invisible, the legal and the illegal, the orderly and the disorderly, the political community continuously redefines its boundaries of belonging, excluding non-citizens not just from political participation, but also from their right to claim rights.

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<sup>193</sup> Semi-structured interview with Mr Ladas, 31/03/2015.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

Polis Ealo, the anti-migrant association established by local citizens at the end of 2007, aimed precisely to re-border the urban space, denouncing the perceived lack of security and order within the neighbourhood and the city, so as to justify the necessity of cleansing interventions. Local authorities often unveiled their open support, participating in the demonstrations or in the symbolic blockades of the port gate organised by the association (Kalaitzidou 2013), whose banners once recited, “we are not going to let the dream of the refugees become the nightmare of our city” (Hole 2012:38). The presence of both the then major of Patras and the governor of the Achaia Region was not simply a way to express solidarity to the “‘infuriated’ residents” (Lafazani 2013:7), but rather a symptom of a higher political problem that reverberated to European scale. With the approval of the Dublin II Regulation, local authorities were indeed compelled to accept those undocumented migrants (to whom the HP, in turn, had often denied asylum in the country) pushed back from the Italian ports of entry, without any possibility to rebut the decisions.

The boundaries of the political community were constructed not only through a political discourse that impeded migrants from raising their voice as a collective group, but also through the social construction of the migrant figure as a subject unable to take care of the self and conveyor of social malaise. Hygienic and sanitation issues were therefore mounted and brought up by the detractors of the camp to protest against the presence of migrants, invoking the establishment of a sovereign authority to regulate and govern migrants’ individual bodies (see Rigby and Schlembach 2013).

In the dominant political discourse, the settlement came to symbolise “the illegality/disorder and dirtiness in contrast to the legality/order and cleanliness in the rest of the city” (Lafazani 2013:7). In the framework of restrictive migration measures and an increasing criminalisation of the migrant figure, order and cleanliness in the urban space could be restored, in the collective consciousness, only through the regular use of “sweep operations”, performed by the HP in response to citizens’ complaints. In February 2008, the regional council appointed the civil cadastre to demolish the camp on the grounds of health and sanitation issues, but the court revoked the order after the opposition of local activists and lawyers<sup>195</sup>. Since then, the camp became the target of police controls, attacks from fascist groups and increasing opposition from local residents (Mantanika 2009; Kalaitzidou 2013). When the camp was demolished in July 2009, the residents prevented firefighters from intervening to extinguish the

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

arson that was generated (Lafazani 2013): the fire was the liberating and disinfectant act to finally restore order and cleanliness.

In her analysis of the migrant camp in Calais, Rygiel (2011:13) suggests that conceptualising the settlement only in terms of exceptional spaces (see Agamben 2005), thus merely focusing on the sovereign authority of state institutions over migrants' right to mobility, risks overlooking "the meaning of the camp itself [as] a site of a struggle... a place through which social relations are forged and acts of citizenship emerge". In the framework of increasingly restrictive migration policies and practices at European and national levels, in October 2007 another organisation arose. Kinisi is a politically independent, self-financed, and a-hierarchical association born to defend the rights of migrants and refugees, provide material support to those trapped in the settlement, and facilitate their contact with local authorities<sup>196</sup>. Apart from the collection and distribution of basic necessities to the people living in the settlement, Kinisi "intervened in the public discourse in order to change the stereotypes and at the same time offered factual solidarity to migrants and refugees" (Lafazani 2013:11).

The birth of Kinisi disrupted the socially constructed distinctions between citizens and non-citizens, producing an antagonistic fracture within the dominant securitised discourse that made migrants emerge as politically active subjects, capable of claiming their right to mobility (see Nyers 2010; Rygiel 2011). Constructing the image of the camp as a site of contentious politics raised nonetheless the socio-political visibility of the camp itself, vis-à-vis the desired and at times necessary invisibility of migrant individualities. The active and visible work of solidarity networks led to the organisation of protests and demonstrations (N. King 2016) but, as Hole points out (Hole 2012; see also Mantanika 2009), the over-politicised role of the association sometimes resulted in substituting for migrants' voice and disclosing their invisibility, disregarding or even disempowering them. In such respect, "'humanitarianism' and 'activism' presented alternative but related prisms through which the border was both contested and regulated" (Rigby and Schlembach 2013:158).

The destruction of the camp and the dispersal of its occupiers constituted probably the highest and most visible moment of the border spectacle (De Genova 2012b, 2013b), in which the intersecting struggles between migrants, local residents,

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<sup>196</sup> Semi-structured interview with one of the founders of Kinisi, 26/05/2015.

civic institutions, political activists, and the police reached their breaking point. Although no longer in the limelight, the dynamics of the border regime have intertwined with the increasing reverberations of the economic crisis, producing a multitude of migrants in excess to be expelled from the labour market and the country (Andrijasevic 2010; Tazzioli 2015a). Therefore, practices of detention and deportation endure, and migrants, although reduced in number and geographically dispersed, still constitute the target of police raids and arrests.

The “sweep operations” disseminated bordering mechanisms across the urban territory, exacerbating migrants’ condition of vulnerability and deportability (De Genova 2002, 2004). In May 2011, in the course of multiple interventions the police cleared the area of St. Dionysus station, forcing migrants to recollect their belongings and rebuild their shelter, and then to evacuate the place and scatter across the city (Hole 2012). In the following months, “In repeated sweep operations the authorities destroyed a number of provisory housing sites and arrested hundreds of sans-papiers”<sup>197</sup>, moving migrants from the city centre to the margins. The denouncement from a group of migrants that escaped capture in October 2012 vouches not only for the brutality of bordering practices, but also for the differential mobility of people within the European space: “Money is being spent in herding immigrants in camps, when they could provide us with documents so that we could decide whether to stay or migrate to other countries, the same thing that the Greeks are doing now because of the crisis”<sup>198</sup>.

With the opening of the new port in July 2011, migrants occupied the abandoned factories just in front of it. Although relocated in the southern periphery of the city, the violence of the border regime continues to operate, as conflicts between migrants and external agents sprout from time to time (Pro Asyl 2012). The HP regularly perform stop-and-search operations in the streets and inside the factories, holding migrants in a constant state of fear. The geographical marginality of the settlement reduced the cruel spectacle of the border, while the decreasing number of migrants abated the aesthetic – that is, political (see Rancière 2009, 2016) – dimension of migrant struggles. Apart from formal public statements or sporadic demonstrations in the city centre, politically visible yet distant from migrants’ eyes and needs, Kinisi

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<sup>197</sup> <http://infomobile.w2eu.net/2011/09/04/i-came-here-to-greece-in-order-to-save-my-life-no-i-they-took-even-my-body-away-from-me/#more-955> (Accessed 03/04/2018).

<sup>198</sup> <http://infomobile.w2eu.net/2012/11/10/message-from-migrants-concerning-sweep-in-patras/#more-2058> (Accessed 03/04/2018).

seems to have lost connection with migrants in the factory, relegated in their socio-economic invisibility. Since the relocation of the port,

The intensity of the problem has dropped...; the needs have reduced at all levels, and even the characteristics of people have changed. Kinisi started to take some initiatives, undertaking better cooperation with local authorities. The work of the association is smoother now, the problem is smaller, and more open to the society of Patras. The police interventions have stopped, so we do not go to the police all the time, unlike before, to protest against violence and detention measures towards migrants.<sup>199</sup>

The socio-spatial divisions between locals and migrants further exacerbate the invisibility of migrants and the peripherality of the factories, whose maze of streets and alleys surrounding them draw “myriad places of divergence and convergence at and around the borderline” (Donnan and Wilson 2010b:13; see also Tilly 2004; Kokkali 2007). Such divisions are sometimes interrupted through humanitarian deeds, delegated to individuals rather than social organisations: a woman sometimes enters the AVEX factory to provide migrants in need with basic medical assistance; few people stop their car at the crossroad between Akti Dimaion and Venizelou Street to give some food to the migrants living in the nearby shacks; local bakeries collect and deliver some leftover bread or pretzels to the migrants at Ladopoulos<sup>200</sup>. Most local NGOs and associations are in fact strongly dependent on the subvention of European or national funds, leaving them little room for manoeuvre for the fulfilment of specific projects outside their usual realm of intervention. The political activism of organised collectivities has thus been replaced with individual acts of humanitarian assistance, which not only tends to conceive migrants as vulnerable and de-politicised agents (Ticktin 2006; Fassin 2007; Cantat 2018), but also reproduces the violence of border enforcement within the factories (Fassin 2005; Walters 2012; J. M. Williams 2015).

#### *Internal fractures: ethnic, religious, and legal distinctions within migrants*

In concomitance with a socio-spatial negotiation with external agents and institutions, a reshaping of social and individual identities *within* the group often occurs during the process of place-making, continuously shifting the social boundaries of group formation and belonging inside the factories (Tilly 2004). Despite experiencing the same conditions of social marginalisation and displacement, sharing the urban space

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<sup>199</sup> See note 196.

<sup>200</sup> Field notes, respectively 03/04/2015, 15/04/2015, and 03/08/2015.

does not necessarily entail the rupture of boundaries between individuals and groups (Yuval-Davis 2003). Similar to the “jungles” in Calais (see Rygiel 2011), the migrant settlements in Patras have never been homogeneous entities, but have tended to reproduce and perpetuate significant class, power, and religious divisions among migrants themselves, accentuating the social conflicts even among individuals and groups from the same national or ethnic background.

In her analysis of the migrant settlement, Olga Lafazani (2013) notes that strict hierarchical relations developed among Afghan migrants, with the emergence of religious institutional leaders occupying the highest positions within the camp. Usually members of the most numerous Hazara ethnic group, these leaders were in charge of maintaining order among all members of the camp, regardless of their ethnic origin, and establishing relations with local authorities and, above all, the police<sup>201</sup>. Ethnic subdivisions reflected not only the hierarchical structure of the camp, but also the locations of the different settlements within and outside the camp (see also Mantanika 2009). Economic disparities constituted another divisive factor: having access to smuggling networks, the wealthiest migrants could cross the border in a relatively quick way, whereas the most destitute ones could only rely on obstinacy or happenstances, thus prolonging their permanence in Greece (Lafazani 2013).

Power, class, and ethnic relations continuously intersect with variegated intensities and outcomes even among migrants in the factories, redefining not only the boundaries between the different groups, but also those among individuals within the same group (see Hill Collins 1997; Yuval-Davis 2006b, 2013). National and ethnic subdivisions are arguably the most discernible lines of demarcation that penetrate visibly across the factories, dividing migrants according to their country of origin or ethnic group. Whereas Sudanese migrants occupy the premises of Peiraiki-Patraiki, Tajik and Hazara Afghans are split between the Ladopoulos and AVEX factories, respectively. Such rigid distinctions can be conceptualised as mechanisms of “defensive rigidity” vis-à-vis a dominant, unknown, and at times hostile culture (Yuval-Davis 2003:316). In some cases, however, “identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes... normalizing categories of oppressive structures” (Butler 1993:308). National and ethnic segmentations need to remain hidden or overcome, in order to avoid intergroup conflicts. A Saudi Arabian migrant preferred to disguise his true origins and pose as Yemenite, pretending to come from a poverty-

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<sup>201</sup> Semi-structured interviews with Mr Ladas, 18/03/2015 and 23/07/2015.

stricken and war-torn country in order to conceal potential class or power distinctions to the other migrants with whom he was sharing the shelter<sup>202</sup>.

On the other hand, identity categories are constantly negotiated and subverted within the factories, attenuated through linguistic and religious commonalities or blurred through constant exchanges between the groups, thus enabling a processual and positional understanding of identity formation (Anthias 2002). In this process, the social boundaries within and across the different migrant groups are continuously created, transformed and transgressed for a better organisation of their everyday life (Tilly 2004). The possibility of speaking the same language, for example, facilitates the access of migrants from different national or ethnic background. Among Sudanese migrants, it was therefore possible to encounter people from Yemen, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia, tied together through language and religious bonds, whereas Pakistan- or Iran-born migrants were present among the Afghan community.

In VESO B, migrants arranged a recreational area where they could charge their mobile phones, relax and play cards under the shade of the trees, or find a moment to pray. Acting as a no man's land in between migrant spaces, VESO obliterates national and ethnic differences, establishing a sort of "primordial state of nature, where normative, modern social order is suspended" (Leshem and Pinkerton 2016:7; see also Altin and Minca 2017). One summer evening, I was having a conversation with a Yemenite migrant under the shade of a maple tree at VESO. During a pause in our chat, he and some Sudanese migrants nearby suddenly stood up and, after the ablutions, went to pray together on the big rectangular carpet laid for the occasion. An Afghan migrant, who was taking advantage of the abusive connection to the powerline to charge his phone and exchange few words with his fellow countrymen, also joined the prayers in their moment of rapprochement to God<sup>203</sup>.

In some cases, religious affinities constitute the most important bond among migrants, subrogating national and ethnic ties. In the early evening of June 20, 2015, I was returning home after an unfruitful visit to the factory AVEX, suddenly emptied for the imminent arrival of a ferryboat, when I bumped into two Sudanese migrants that invited me to join them. After stopping at VESO, where a few people were chatting around the charger area or playing cards, I followed one of them inside the neighbouring complex of Peiraiki-Patraiki, where some occupiers were preparing

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<sup>202</sup> Informal conversation with T., Saudi Arabia, 29/03/2015.

<sup>203</sup> Field notes, 18/07/2015.

food. Here, B., after a brief conversation on the successful journey of his fellow companions through the Balkans, accompanied me on the roof of the building, where we could enjoy a panoramic view over the port area, and discuss the scheduled ferryboat docked in the quay. As the sun was going down and the evening breeze freshening the air up, several other migrants were incessantly coming and going from the roof, unfolding two carpets next to each other and carrying some food upstairs in preparation for dinner. When the sunset was complete, they all gathered on the roof, sitting altogether around the food to eat. There were about 20 people eating, drinking and chatting, sharing a particular moment of conviviality: it was their celebration of Ramadan.

Commoning strategies and traditions, Ifekwunigwe argues (2016; see also Cwerner 2001; J. Brown 2011), tend to travel with migrants, reminding of, or reproducing, the communitarian atmosphere of their countries of origin even in carceral and liminal spaces. The invitation that I received to join their meal, B. later explained to me, is part of their ritual customs and celebrations. In Sudan, they gather in the streets to eat, with many people bringing food and drinks, and invite those who do not have or have not brought food: this is their concept of hospitality, and one of their ways to reconcile with God. After dinner, they brought the empty trays downstairs; some of them started to pray, while some other began to prepare the shisha and smoke. During that moment of relaxation, I met a young Sudanese newcomer, who probably looked curious about my presence among them. After a quick introduction, he immediately noticed that in the factory, where he had been for only two days, most of the people were indeed from Sudan. However, they do not mind if someone comes from North or South Sudan: they gather together to eat and chat, despite their different nationalities, because what ties them is religion<sup>204</sup>.

As Joseph and Rothfuss note in their analysis of the geopolitical and symbolical bordering of Nigeria's ethno-religiously segregated city of Jos (2014:178), physical attributes are – often mistakenly – “stereotyped and used as identity markers”, redrawing boundaries of identity and belonging between people sharing or transiting through the same place. As an Afghan migrant recounted, during the daily migrant hunting at the internal parking lot of the port area, a driver spotted him underneath his lorry. In intimidating the unwelcomed guest to go away, he swore offensive words against his God, unaware that, after having spent several years in Finland before being

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<sup>204</sup> Field notes, 20/06/2015.

deported, the Afghan migrant had actually converted to Christianity. In running away from the port area, the migrant burst into a scornful laugh, cognisant of the fact that they were praying to the same God<sup>205</sup>.

Just as national or ethnic markers, also religious identities are sometimes disguised, especially when not conforming to the dominant one either in their countries of origin or within the group. After several years in Sweden, an Iran-born Afghan migrant opted to change his name and abandon his religious beliefs. A small criminal conviction triggered the process of his removal from the country and deportation to Afghanistan, a country where he had never been before. The expulsion interrupted his social and physical existence, exacerbating his immaterial and daunting condition of liminality, in between a country that could no longer accept him and another one that was not yet ready to do so (Yngvesson and Coutin 2006). When he eventually reconnected with his family in Iran during his journey back to Europe, tensions arose and forced him to leave soon, as his mother could not accept his atheism. The return to the factories compelled him to readopt his original name to avoid problems or miscomprehensions with the other migrants<sup>206</sup>.

The intertwining of social and economic capital may also have concrete repercussions on the everyday life of migrants within the factories. Besides shaping (im)mobility patterns, the availability of socio-economic resources influences the decision of whether to apply for asylum in the country, creating a multiplicity of everyday practices and subjective experiences that configure a “queer politics of asylum” (De Genova, Garelli, and Tazzioli 2018). According to De Genova (2010:106), a queer politics reflects the “incorrigible” character of migrants, who seek “not to be integrated within an existing economy of normative and normalizing distinctions, but rather to sabotage and corrode that hierarchical order as such”. The Rancièrian distinction between police and politics, i.e. between the orderly computation and amalgamation of the different societal parts and the exceptional and unsettling force of its excess, outlines the contours of the notion of incorrigibility as the most authentic site of contentious politics (*ibid.*).

The dichotomous exemplification of the queer politics of asylum seems nonetheless to overlook the multifarious strategies of negotiation and confrontation that migrants adopt vis-à-vis the European migration and border regime. Migrants’

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<sup>205</sup> Informal conversation with A. R., Afghanistan, 04/06/2015.

<sup>206</sup> Informal conversation with M. T., Afghanistan, 03/04/2015.

mobility and immobility patterns within the EU are shaped less by their refusal of the “structural violence of the juridical order of international protection” (De Genova, Garelli, and Tazzioli 2018:251) or its ruthless statistics on recognition rates delineating the geopolitical divisions of the CEAS (see Figure 44), than by a dense network of underground information, personal ambitions, economic resources, and social encounters that are continuously produced, configured, and exchanged along the journey (Mainwaring 2016; see also Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos 2016).

### Recognition rates (%) for Afghan nationals

2014

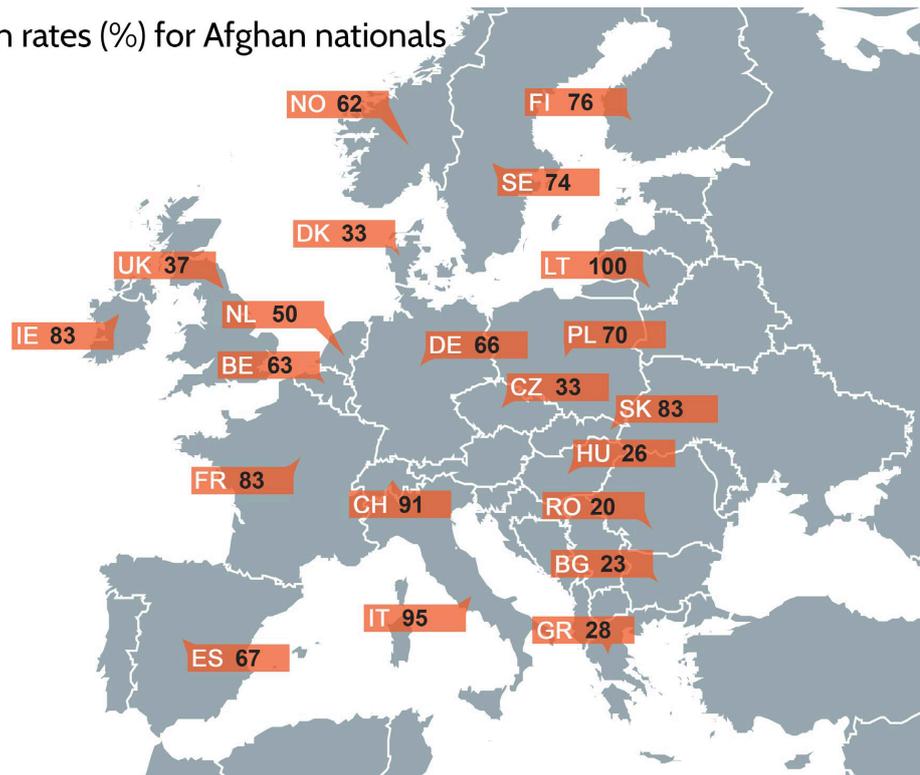


Figure 44: Recognition rates for Afghan asylum seekers in European countries, 2014. Source: AIDA 2015a.

According to an Afghan asylum seeker, just crossing the Adriatic Sea and reaching Italy could be a valid fall-back option, because Italian authorities usually ignore whether migrants had been already fingerprinted in other countries and could always release documents for their free circulation within the EU<sup>207</sup>. Another Afghan asylum seeker confirmed that the possibilities of obtaining asylum and travel documents in Greece were curtailed and the waiting times extended, whereas in Italy Afghan people could get asylum after few months and easily reach other European countries<sup>208</sup>.

<sup>207</sup> Informal conversation with M. T., Afghanistan, 16/02/2015.

<sup>208</sup> Informal conversation with an Afghan asylum seeker, 01/08/2015.

Questioned on the possibility of being identified and expelled to Turkey, a third Afghan migrant firmly replied, “No! We go forward, and don’t come back!”<sup>209</sup>

Economic, social, and legal constraints constantly intertwine and cut across migrants’ lives, shaping and differentiating their everyday experiences. In her research on the multiple interconnections between time and migration, Melanie Griffiths (2014; see also Griffiths, Rogers, and Bridget Anderson 2013) analyses how the asylum administrative procedures produce different temporal variations and tensions with ultimate backlashes on the body of migrants. Similarly, the deliberate decision that some migrants take of eschewing the mechanisms of the Dublin Regulation affects their internal organisation within the factories and their mobility patterns, generating frantic accelerations throughout their relatively immobile (and immobilised) everyday lives.

The precarious legal status of most migrants in the Ladopoulos factory, combined with the scarce socio-economic resources at their disposal, seems to entice them to continuous and reckless efforts to cross the border to Italy, in order to avoid potential capture and arrest<sup>210</sup>. Those who only possess the one-month paper provided upon their first arrival in Greece have a temporary protection against police search-and-stop operations: as an Afghan migrant recounted, every time migrants go out of the factory, no matter whether they are going to the supermarket or simply walking to the city centre, “the police always stop you and ask you for *chartia, chartia, chartia*”<sup>211</sup>. The necessity to leave the country before its expiry determines therefore their resolute, almost frenetic, intention to cross the border.

Within the legal circuits of international protection and humanitarian assistance, age constitutes another important category of differentiation among migrants (see Shanthi Robertson 2014), constantly negotiated in their relations with police forces and local NGOs. Protected on paper by the international human rights law, migrant minors can exploit their young age to avoid detention or deportation, although there are reported cases of violence towards them (Migreurop 2010; Human Rights Watch 2013; Pro Asyl 2013b). Mendacity about their real age represents a survival strategy, a form of personal protection that migrants could employ against police officers when caught in the port area. During my regular visits to the factories, migrants would often

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<sup>209</sup> Informal interview with F., Afghanistan, 20/07/2015.

<sup>210</sup> Field notes, 22/07/2015.

<sup>211</sup> Informal conversation with H., Afghanistan, 25/07/2015.

made me guess how old they looked, hoping that they could demonstrate to be younger than their real age<sup>212</sup>.

Age is in fact saturated with social meanings, and specific timings can change the life course of individuals (Elder 1994; Kara 2016). The underage condition reconfigures the boundaries of humanitarian assistance (Walters 2012), as it can grant access to the nearby Praksis Drop-in Centre, which provides migrants with basic food or hygienic services<sup>213</sup> and a document to show to police forces in case of arrest in the port area. Although not valid as identification or to certify their status in the country, the paper might become useful to claim their immediate release: “When I go to the port, or walk along the street, and the police catch me, this paper can help me: the people from Praksis can come to the police station, and I can be free. If I don’t have this card, I may go to the camp for six months”<sup>214</sup>. Although dealing especially with unaccompanied minors, the Centre also hosts homeless and undocumented adults, often in transit to other European countries: “For our welfare system, they are invisible”<sup>215</sup>. Yet, for adults any paper becomes redundant in case of arrest: “the police caught me three times, and they checked for my documents twice, but I didn’t show them the Praksis card... They don’t care about that”<sup>216</sup>.

In some other cases, the simple act of lodging an asylum claim confers a certain degree of visibility; yet, it is not necessarily an aesthetic, political visibility in the sense Rancière (2009, 2016) would debate, but rather a form of (precarious) social recognition, which allows one discreetly to explore the outside world and simultaneously to negotiate their presence, although in a constant state of domination and marginalisation (Mubi Brighenti 2007). Asylum, therefore, appears less as a mere juridical form of international protection than as a parallel strategy that consents paradoxically to overcome the deficiencies of the asylum provisions and survive the expensive everyday life of the capital, where everything literally comes at a price (see Grohmann 2015). Conscious that obtaining asylum would have not bestowed any basic socio-economic rights upon him, a Sudanese migrant decided nonetheless to apply, because “we stay in this building, where no one asks me for money. When I

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<sup>212</sup> Field notes, 27/07/2015.

<sup>213</sup> Informal interview with A., Afghanistan, 05/06/2015.

<sup>214</sup> See note 178.

<sup>215</sup> Semi-structured interview with the local coordinator of Praksis in Patras, 24/07/2015.

<sup>216</sup> See note 180.

stayed in Athens, I had to pay for my house; it was too much. Here, I live for free; I don't have to pay for the rent"<sup>217</sup>.

The obtainment of (or at least the wait for) documents allows some migrants to materialise within the social landscape of the city and develop their socio-economic networks with other migrants and with locals, even in liminal and precarious conditions (Belloni 2016; Yngvesson and Coutin 2006). In the “interstitial space” (Fontanari and Ambrosini 2018; see also Mubi Brighenti 2013) between the pervasiveness of bordering practices, the bureaucratic lengthiness of the asylum procedures, and the condition of immobility and waiting in which migrants are relegated, some migrants resort to petty social and economic activities that reconfigure the everyday as a site of continuous negotiation and struggle (Lefebvre 2014; see also J. C. Scott 2000). Given the restrictive bureaucratic conditions that prevent asylum seekers to actually find a job despite their immediate access to the labour market<sup>218</sup>, entrepreneurship becomes, therefore, not only a survival strategy to preserve and reproduce the precarious everyday life within the factory, but also a means to negotiate their permanent temporariness in the city and engage dynamically with the surrounding context (Lazaridis and Koumandraki 2003).

This is the case of I., a Sudanese migrant. In Greece since 2009, I. has been lying in wait since then for a reply to his asylum claim, which slipped back into the old system. Considered too old to sneak under a lorry and yet willing to eschew the exploitative labour in the fields, I. eventually settled in Patras and reinvented himself as a scrap merchant, selling cigarettes, chargers, second-hand phones and even food to other migrants. Like the “ants” in Byrska-Szklarczyk's ethnographic narrative of petty smugglers across the Polish-Ukrainian border (2012), I. navigates through the border capitalising on his basic knowledge of the Greek language, dealing with local

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<sup>217</sup> See note 179.

<sup>218</sup> According to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration website (<https://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/european-migration-network---norway/ad-hoc-queries/asylum-seekers-access-to-labour-market-2014/>), “Greece maintains that asylum seekers have immediate access to the labour market, but have very strict stipulations for gaining that access; a temporary work permit can be issued to an asylum seeker provided that a labor market survey has been conducted and there are no unemployed Greeks, EU citizens, recognized refugees or legally resident third-country nationals who are interested to work in the particular field in question and who also are specialized in the field for which the work permit has been applied for”. Such bureaucratic provisions have been removed in 2016, but “taking into consideration the current context of financial crisis, the high unemployment rates and further obstacles posed by competition with Greek-speaking employees, it is particularly difficult in practice for asylum seekers to have access to the labour market, which may lead to ‘undeclared’ employment with severe repercussions on the enjoyment of basic social rights” (Asylum Information Database website, [www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/employment-and-education/access-labour-market](http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/employment-and-education/access-labour-market)).

inhabitants and suppliers, and selling his merchandise to migrants in the factories. The most profitable trade is the selling of cigarettes, which he usually sells unpackaged, in order to meet the needs of those migrants who cannot afford to buy the whole packet. Although capable to live by the profits of this petty trade, I. was worried that the decrease in the number of migrants in conjunction with the opening of Macedonian borders in summer 2015 could represent a serious blow for his activity<sup>219</sup>.

I. is not the only one who tries to glean some coins for everyday survival. Some other Sudanese migrants, for example, usually gather in the car parks of two nearby supermarkets, helping customers with their trolleys or wiping the cars' windscreens at the traffic light in order to collect some money. Legal and socio-economic conditions represent important factors that influence migrants' decisions to undertake such activity: while waiting for the response to their asylum claims or the release of their travel documents, migrants prefer not to put their lives at risk, and to collect instead some money for their everyday survival. This activity is also a way to establish interpersonal relations with the members of another small group of Sudanese migrants, occupying few shacks between Akti Dimaion and Venizelou Street, just in front of the northern exit of the new port. At the crossroad, migrants alternate with each other for washing windscreens, exchanging few words with their fellows hanging around in the area. Within the regime of differential inclusion in the informal labour market (De Genova 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012, 2013), migrants' visibility at the crossroad and their direct contact with natives might allow them to be approached by local recruiters in search of replaceable and exploitable workforce in the agricultural or construction sector.

The words of a 34-year-old Sudanese man well summarise the autonomous character of migration, with the underlying multiplicity of strategies, expedients and patterns that migrants can employ to craft and negotiate their presence (or absence) while contriving their way to cross the border (De Genova 2009; Karakayali and Rigo 2010; Mezzadra 2011b). After having experienced several ordeals in coming to Greece, he thus depicted his situation:

“I came to Patras because anywhere else in Greece there is no chance to stay, work, sleep, or eat, except for the factory... I don't know where I will go, I'm only searching for a good place to live a good life and be educated... I don't have money, but most importantly I don't want to encourage smugglers. I don't like them because they are liars. Even if I had \$50 million, I would never try to go

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<sup>219</sup> Field notes, 18/07/2015 and 22/07/2015.

with smugglers anymore. I want to go independently: if I fail, I will stay here, or be deported. This is my decision, and I hope that sooner or later everybody will do the same, instead of giving their money to shitty smugglers”<sup>220</sup>.

With the re-occupation of these abandoned spaces, I argue, the factories have become alternative places to live temporarily without having much money at their disposal, to seek refuge from police intrusions and develop new techniques of crossing the border, and to build up solidarity networks among each other. In this context, migrants have not simply taken possession of such empty buildings, but have transformed them into meaningful and symbolic places despite the hardships, through a multiplicity of activities and a network of relations that transcend the local and reach the national and European levels (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1994, 2005). It is to the analysis of this process that I now turn.

## **6.5 Building the commons**

### *Emplacement*

The process of “becoming at home” entails not only a negotiation with the surrounding environs and among its internal dwellers, but also the creation of a “homely space... open enough so that one can perceive opportunities of ‘a better life’” (Hage 1997:3) and the definition of certain rules “designed to maximise solidarity and commitment to the whole” (Grohmann 2015:117). Paradoxically, the demarcation lines traced by and across migrants seem to fit for the purpose, generating social connections and encounters among them (see Cooper and Rumford 2011, 2013; Dzenovska 2014). Rather than creating internal colonial subdivisions and reproducing the condition of subalternity of certain ethnic and racial groups (Chávez 2013), the boundaries that migrants delineate inside the factories, I argue, facilitate their domestic organisation regulating their everyday life and moulding a communal sense of belonging.

The transformation of these precarious spaces into affective places operates, in turn, a disruption or an utter subversion of the official and unofficial boundaries crossing migrants’ everyday life (Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos 2016:5; see also Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). If the factories represent a mandatory dwelling solution for dozens of migrants attracted by the possibility of living on a tight budget and leaving the country in a relatively independent manner, the inner organisation of

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<sup>220</sup> Semi-structured interview with A. M. A., Sudan, 31/05/2015.

everyday activities renders them, I argue, alternative places of solidarity and active resistance against the European border and migration regime. The partitioning into groups allows a better arrangement and employment of the few resources available, and enables the inclusion of newcomers and their socialisation within the group. In other words, the social boundaries within migrant groups fosters a better implementation of everyday activities and the formation of networks of mutual aid and assistance (Tilly 2004). Every person participates with little economic effort (or not at all, if they do not have money) in the provision of food for the group and contributes to the preparation of meals according to a non-written rotational basis. As if part of the same mechanism that requires the correct functioning and cooperation among all its gears, migrants assemble and harmonise their lives “through commoning the immediate sociality and materiality of everyday existence” (*ibid.*:5; see also Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013).

Time in the factories is marked by different velocities and rhythms, which shape the everyday life of migrants. Slow and repetitive actions – the times of eating, sleeping, and praying – unfold throughout the day: the biological and natural times, combined with the sociocultural times of their religious duties, create standardised habits and routines, as well as moments of closeness and togetherness among migrants. Although bureaucratic provisions might still inflict exasperating waits or frantic accelerations (see Griffiths 2014), collective spaces of conviviality and moments of mental distraction delineate an agentive and re-appropriated time, allowing for a temporary extrication from the pervasive and carceral tangles of the border regime (see Foucault 1995, 2010; Lefebvre 2004, 2014).

The first activities that contribute to the construction of home and the progressive building of the commons are those related to the immediate reproduction of life, from the sharing of food to the organisation of daily activities (De Angelis 2017). In this sense, the preparation and consumption of meals represent not only an imposed biological need, but also a moment of togetherness that migrants can use in order to chat, rest, and restore their energies in preparation for approaching the port area (see Kara 2016). During one of my visits to Peiraiki-Patraiki, O. S., a Sudanese migrant, introduced me inside the warehouse, where three other people were preparing tea. While sitting around the makeshift fire, some other people slowly started to come out from their rooms and wander around the factory. After few minutes, everybody was busy doing something: three of them were around the fire, pouring and drinking

tea, chatting, and eventually cleaning up their pots and cups using some plastic jerry cans filled with water. A couple of them went to and from the factory by bike, in order to reach the other people at the crossroad and to shop at the local supermarket. As mealtime was approaching, O. S. began to cut some aubergines, placing them in a small aluminium tray<sup>221</sup>.

As Čapo Žmegač shows through her analysis of the return of the Croatian diaspora from Serbia after 1991 (2010:185), the emotional affect towards a house resides “not merely in the material, proprietorial sense, but also in the sense of identification with [it]”, which conveys a sense of pride and homeliness. That same day, after a brief conversation with another Sudanese person, I turned to O. S. again, who was coming back and forth from a small room next to where we were sitting. I asked him what was there: “The kitchen” he replied, naturally. At my request, he brought me there: the room – which supposedly hosted administrative offices – was actually divided into two sections, with the kitchen hidden and separated through a glass wall. In entering that cubicle, a small cupboard hung on the wall, while a table lay underneath the transparent panels dividing that small space. The most striking thing, however, was a little camp stove alimented by a gas cylinder placed under the table: O. S. was cooking the aubergines right over there. Given the absence of electricity, the appliance would allow migrants to cook their food in a relative quick and healthy way, without the need to light and use fires. In fact, he looked remarkably proud of that facility: they procured the stove for few euros, while the cylinder, which may last a couple of months, cost them about €20<sup>222</sup>.

Despite the vastness of the warehouse, every room and compartment is depleted of its original meanings and scopes, re-appropriated and re-signified through migrants’ everyday use, and re-adapted to their necessities, through a process that Laura Hammond defines as “emplacement” (2004). In the hallway just before the “kitchen”, few chairs, stools, and tables scraped together around the factory would form a small “living room”, where migrants can chat, prepare and drink some tea, or play chess. In front of it, although being a dark and rather humid place, a couple of lines hang from old pipes, where migrants dry their clothes. An old bicycle leans against the wall, ready to use for quick shifts to and from other settlements, while a supermarket trolley allows migrants to refill and carry the heavy water tanks around the factory (see Figure

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<sup>221</sup> Field notes, 18/04/2015.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

45). Separated from the living room to guarantee a moment of privacy, a one-square-metre carpet lets migrants execute their daily prayers. Other offices located on the ground and first floors of the warehouse have turned instead into sleeping areas: in overstepping the kitchen, a first series of rooms are employed as dormitories, while a staircase located in the middle of the corridor leads to the remaining upstairs bedrooms.



**Figure 45: The re-appropriation of abandoned spaces through everyday use.**  
Source: Picture by the author, 15/03/2015.

Behind the two large rooms on the right-hand side of the entrance, just opposite the “living room”, another dirty and unlit staircase leads upstairs, to a vast room covered in rubbish. Stepping through it and following the narrow way to a small hidden door, one enters another big room, which migrants sometimes use to light fires, cook food, or play games. In the middle of the room, a small low table is surrounded by few chairs and a small bench, while on the left-hand side some bags, boxes, and cans are placed on a cupboard and a desk<sup>223</sup>. The enormous empty space of the warehouse surrounding migrants’ presence, which probably used to contain machinery and equipment, is now a rubbish dump that vouches for the temporary character of migrant settlement.

The whole industrial complex bears testimony to the living presence of migrants, who have filled those empty spaces with everyday symbols and personal meanings

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<sup>223</sup> Field notes, 14/06/2015.

(see Lefebvre 1991; Hage 1997). In the former administrative buildings of the factory, at the entrance of the eastern gate, colourful cloths cover the glassless windows, whereas some wet clothes are hung on the line between the external columns. A short staircase at the corner of the building leads to the entrance, where migrants have arranged an improvised hall with few chairs and a small table. On the same floor, another two empty rooms have been turned, respectively, into a living room with blemished sofas and a kitchen, where migrants can relax and chat while preparing tea or food. Writings and drawings cover the walls of the premises, expressing resentment towards the situation in their country of origin or hopes regarding the future. On the upper floor, a dozen mattresses laid on the ground tidily occupy two large rooms, where migrants keep their few belongings, documents, and memories<sup>224</sup>.

The process of emplacement is visible also in the other factories. Overlooking the check-in area of the new port, the former paper mill Ladopoulos is now occupied by Afghan migrants of Tajik origin, unwittingly profiting from the financial distresses of the municipality, incapable of renovating the whole area in its possession. When entering from the main gate, a long corridor divides the recently renovated municipal offices on the right-hand side, and three large derelict edifices, some of which still containing old machineries. In one of them, migrants have arranged a small “living room”, with a couple of sofas surrounded by three tents and piles of debris and rubbish (Figure 46). Next to the sofas, an open-air unceasingly-flowing water pipe allows migrants to wash themselves or fill their bottles before attempting the crossing. Opposite them, another three tall constructions, connected through flying bridges and passages, dominate the whole industrial landscape and the port area just in front of it.

One summer day, one of the Afghan migrants occupying the factory invited me upstairs, to document where they lived. With the permission of other migrants, I followed him along the four flights of stair leading to the roof, disclosing a decaying and dismal setting replete with ruins and filth. On the roof, a 15-square-metre cabin provided accommodation for few migrants. Profiting from the weak connection to the powerline, migrants could also make use of a kettle and a small fridge, as well as, most importantly, charge their phones. Next to the shelter, a tap and a mirror precariously hung on the bridge connecting the other side of the factory enabled migrants to brush their teeth and shave. A small fireplace to prepare tea lay beside it, while two armchairs

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<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

positioned on the edge of the roof provided an unusual view over the whole port area<sup>225</sup>.



**Figure 46: Details of the “living room”.**  
Source: Picture by the author, 03/08/2015.

The internal composition and distribution of buildings at AVEX differ from the other two factories. Apart from the three brick edifices at the entrance of the main gate in Anthias Road, the external perimeter of the factory is surrounded by tall, extensive open-air warehouses, one of which, located next to the entrance, connects a derelict structure in the middle of the open-space of the factory. Scattered across the factory, a few wooden shacks provided an improvised accommodation to small groups of 3-4 and up to 10-12 migrants, according to their spaciousness<sup>226</sup>. Similarly, makeshift fireplaces were dispersed around the factory, allowing the groups of migrants to gather and socialise, while preparing some tea or food (see Figure 47). In the north-western corner of the factory, at the crossroad between Akti Dimaion and Anthias Road, a wooden picnic bench on a raised platform often reunited migrants during moments of conviviality and relaxation, with a direct view over the nearby port.

In every settlement, open-pit piles of rubbish grow day after day around the areas where migrants eat and sleep, attracting flies and mice<sup>227</sup>. The negligence of

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<sup>225</sup> Field notes, 14/07/2015.

<sup>226</sup> Field notes, 03/04/2015.

<sup>227</sup> Informal conversation with an Afghan migrant at the Ladopoulos factory, 10/07/2015.

communal spaces and the filthiness of personal demeanour represent the undesired consequence of “A highly consumerist society... in whose garbage lived garbage people” (Lafazani 2013:7). The terminal link along the chain of food production, distribution, consumption, and waste (see Griffin, Sobal, and Lyson 2009), some migrants depended on donations of excess food, whose quality appears immediately below standards. In Ladopoulos, a nearby bakery would sometimes drop some waste bread and pastries, while a restaurant would donate leftover food to those who could go there in the evening. One hot day in July 2015, during an informal conversation, an Afghan migrant made me notice a bag full of dried out bread with flies buzzing around, whose smell was pervading the air through the whiffle of the breeze: “here’s what we have to eat inside the factory – he said – we have this bread to eat, which is no longer good”<sup>228</sup>.



**Figure 47: A group of Afghan migrants around a makeshift fireplace.**  
Source: Picture by the author, 02/04/2015.

In some cases, though, dirtiness constitutes an individual or collective “act of refusal” (R. Jones 2012; see also J. C. Scott 2009) against the dominant border and migration regime that entraps migrants in a constant state of illegality and deportability (De Genova 2002). Confined within a country that leaves them scarce possibilities to escape, migrants employ filthiness and abjection to reproduce their transient status. Dirtiness epitomises migrants’ temporary presence in an unhospitable place, their

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<sup>228</sup> See note 209.

strong determination to cross the border as quickly as possible. A Sudanese migrant once showed me his filthy clothes, adding that he did not mind appearing so dirty in Greece, as he did not plan to stay there anyway. The opportunity to reach another country would have entailed a personal redemption: if he had crossed the border to Italy, he would have been instead “clean and shining”<sup>229</sup>.

*The everyday organisation: solidarity and mutual support*

In his study of the commons, Massimo De Angelis argues that “The phenomenology of commons is grounded in daily life” (2017:101): by the same token, the internal organisation of migrants’ everyday life provides further insights over the construction of the commons. As Tsavdaroglou reminds us (2018:379); “‘Commons’ don’t exist per se but they are constituted through the social process of commoning”. Such a process is never fixed once and for all, but subject to the establishment of continuously changing “strategies of reproduction within the broader contingency of social reproduction, i.e. within conditions of need” (Hansen and Zechner 2017:122). The strategies that migrants create are variegated, developing “a world of knowledge, of information, of tricks for survival, of mutual care, of social relations, of services exchange, of solidarity and sociability that can be shared, used and ... expand[ed]” (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013:190). Commons, therefore, cannot rely on the absence of rules nor in government-imposed restrictions; rather, “it is through (re)production in common that communities of producers decide for themselves the norms, values and measures of things” (De Angelis 2010:955; see also Ostrom et al. 2012).

During the process of building the commons, “Values practices, such as loyalty to friends, conviviality, mutual aid, care, and even struggles, are developed” (De Angelis 2017:12). In this respect, the separation into small groups of 7-8 people each responds to the need for organising everyday common activities, enabling the incorporation of newcomers and facilitating the daily purchase and preparation of meals. Although divided through national and ethnic lines, groups are not totally isolated: everybody knows each other and the members of other groups, either inside or outside the factory. Besides, the social boundaries traversing migrant groups are continuously reshaped and transgressed, forging variegated and intersecting networks of sharing, trust and mutual assistance (Tilly 2004, 2007).

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<sup>229</sup> Informal conversation with a Sudanese migrant, 05/06/2015.

Kin and social networks, stretching beyond the reach of the factories, operate as powerful organising forces to establish the group to which every newcomer is assigned. As Kara posits (2016:196) “The existence of informal networks of solidarity between migrants is often seen to compensate for the lack of formal (sense of) belonging in the host society”. In most cases, contacts are established well before coming to Patras: after spending some time in Athens, a Sudanese migrant received information that in Patras people attempted to reach Italy hiding in ferryboats, and thus decided to go there<sup>230</sup>. “When I was in Athens, every person was speaking about that [Patras]”, recounted another Afghan migrant<sup>231</sup>. Social connections might also extend beyond Greece, influencing migrants’ paths and trajectories:

“Some of them [Afghan migrants] come from Athens, they have friends here, and they make one group. There are ten people here, ten people there: they eat together, they go to the port together, they are friends, they have met each other before, in Iran, in Turkey, maybe in the camps in the islands”<sup>232</sup>.

The degree of porosity of the commons’ boundaries is founded on the everyday practices of the commons themselves, allowing variegated moments of interconnection with the surrounding world (De Angelis 2017). By their very definition, commons are spaces that indeed necessitate security and protection from the external world, although maintaining a certain degree of openness towards newcomers and users (Stavrides 2014). The initiation of newcomers into the group entails a quick but efficient process of learning-by-doing that confers migrants, concurrently, responsibility inside the group and autonomy from it, vis-à-vis a dominant narration that instead entraps them within a dichotomous and often inescapable dimension of victimhood or culpability (Mainwaring 2016; Squire 2017). Once arrived at the factory, the newcomer is welcomed into the group with which he had previous contacts and initiated to its performative mechanisms and procedures (cp. G. H. Brown, Brunelle, and Malhotra 2017). For the first three days, he does not participate in the purchase of food or in the preparation of meals; rather, he learns how the inner organisation of the group works and receives basic indications about the best places to reach the port area and techniques to sneak underneath lorries avoiding risks

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<sup>230</sup> Semi-structured interview with T. O., Sudan, 06/06/2015.

<sup>231</sup> Semi-structured interview with A., Afghanistan, 01/06/2015.

<sup>232</sup> See note 182.

or accidents. After three days, he becomes a proper member of the group and can start to collaborate in the daily expenses and works<sup>233</sup>.

The progressive construction of the commons not only reinforces a mutual sense of belonging, conceived as “an experience of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social ties are manifested in experiences and emotions” (Kara 2016:189; see also Yuval-Davis 2006a; Anthias 2008; J. Brown 2011), but it also engenders new forms of regulation of social and political life. The organisation and division of labour within restricted groups facilitates the execution of everyday activities and, at the same time, produces customary and repetitive dynamics that articulate the regular vital flow within the factories. In relation to food, for example, Sudanese migrants collect some money altogether, about €1 per person every day, to purchase the necessary provisions (chicken or beef meat, rice, bread, vegetables, and seasonings) from the nearby supermarket. While some are appointed to go shopping, others, in turn, are entitled to cook: that day, it was O. S.’s turn<sup>234</sup>. Similarly, the same division into groups and organisation of duties occurs also among the Hazara Afghans. Each group occupies a different part of the factory, and organises autonomously for the provision of food:

“Five, ten, or fifteen people together put money and buy some food. We do that in groups, and shop together, because if you want to buy everyday food, you cannot get that much every time. You have to be together: you put €5 each, go to the supermarket Lidl, and buy food and everything you need. It’s cheaper”<sup>235</sup>.

In such a perfectly oiled mechanism, every single person counts, and all efforts are made to guarantee that no one is left behind: mutual aid and care are constitutive practices of building the commons (De Angelis 2017). Either as an alleged legacy from their country of origin (see Ifekwunigwe 2016; Boccagni 2010; J. Brown 2011) or as spontaneous actions and practices generated by the despicable living conditions (Tsavdaroglou 2018; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013), practices of conviviality and solidarity extend to those members who cannot join the group life. After having escaped from an authoritarian and violent regime in Sudan, B. arrived in Greece only to find out, to his own cost, that his situation had not improved. In his opinion, in both countries the government and the police do not work for the people, but at least in Sudan ordinary people are much more willing to help other people: if they see or know

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<sup>233</sup> Informal conversation with O. S., Sudan, 18/04/2015.

<sup>234</sup> Field notes, 18/04/2015.

<sup>235</sup> See note 182.

that someone is overcoming a difficult situation, people tend to help him/her, no matter what his/her conditions or skin colour are. Conflating a nostalgic view of his country of origin with the crude reality of migrants' condition in Greece, acts of solidarity are thus reproduced and performed in the everyday life of the factories (see Kara 2016). It is here that the case of the disabled migrant came up: unable to walk after a failed attempt to sneak under a lorry, the person lived in one of the many rooms of the factory, constantly looked after by his group members who would regularly pay him a visit in order to bring him some food or chat with him. When B. would receive some sporadic food donations, he would rather give them to his fellow companion, who did not have the possibility to buy food for himself<sup>236</sup>.

Drawing from the Lefebvrian concept of the right to the city (Lefebvre 1996; see also Harvey 2012), advocates of the commons usually posit that housing common spaces acquire significant spatial importance, as they maintain vital connections with central urban networks and organisations in relation to the peripheral location of refugee state camps (Tsavdaroglou 2018; Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos 2015). In Patras, however, the peripheral position of the factories renders them spatially and imaginatively distant from the city centre, where most of local associations and NGOs are located. For this reason, migrants often have to rely on their own means and capabilities for their survival and reproduction, even in problematic situations. The lack of migrants with medical knowledge, for instance, requires long excursions to the city centre, particularly dangerous for undocumented migrants. After the worsening of the pain in his knee following a bad fall from the port fences, an Afghan migrant was worried not only that he could not have gone to the port for a while, but also that he did not know whether there were doctors around that could have visited him<sup>237</sup>. The idea of going to the central branch of the NGO Doctors of the World was deemed necessary but extremely risky, given his irregular status.

On the other hand, the presence of such skilful migrants might create informal hierarchies of reverence and respect, while simultaneously enlarging the boundaries of solidarity and mutual support (Cohen 1982). During a colloquial conversation with a Yemenite refugee, the example of O. S. was immediately brought to light: indeed, he affirmed that O. S. is a great person, as he always looks after sick people, taking care of their wounds or problems. In saying so, he pointed his finger towards a person

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<sup>236</sup> Informal interview with B., Sudan, 25/06/2015.

<sup>237</sup> Field notes, 27/07/2015.

who was sitting a few metres away from us with a bandage on his ankle, claiming that O. S. helped him cure his wound and change his bandage regularly<sup>238</sup>. In this respect, acts of self-protection contribute not only to reinforce the spirit of solidarity within the group, but also to eschew the dominant mechanisms of carceral or medical confinement, providing migrants with renovated agency and security (Innes 2016).

Although being on a status of “permanent temporariness” (Bailey et al. 2002), migrants have re-appropriated the empty spaces of the factories and performed acts of citizenship, mutualism, and solidarity (Isin and Nielsen 2008; Aradau, Huysmans, and Squire 2010), negotiating and contesting the dominant bordering practices on a daily basis. Migrants in Patras are not “here to stay” (cp. Meret and Rasmussen 2014; Borgstede 2017); yet, rather than submitting to the perverse dispositions of the CEAS, they claim their right to cross the border, subverting the security mechanisms imposed and enacted from above (Nyers 2009; Squire and Bagelman 2014). The occupation of urban spaces and the daily infiltrations into the port have reverberations at national and European level, challenging and contesting a whole series of legal and physical barriers that are actually in place to filter and decelerate migrants’ access into the European space. Within the framework of the European border and migration regime, the daily struggles of migrants in Patras, I argue, transcend the local scale, establishing and developing a close-knit pattern of interrelations and articulations that connects other border struggles at national and European level. In negotiating and contesting the perverse mechanisms of the border, migrants’ daily struggles in Patras intersect with the myriad of visible and less visible actions that migrants perform – from Calais to Ventimiglia, Lesbos, and Melilla – to defy or escape the governmental apparatus that block or regulate their mobilities.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

The chapter investigated past and current transit migration movements through Patras, vis-à-vis the logistical configurations shaping the port area (see chapter 4) and the border and migration regime regulating the (im)mobility of migrants within the European and national space (see chapter 5). While the former tend to eliminate or reduce logistical and network barriers to favour the expansion of global capital, the latter erects security measures to guarantee that commercial and capital exchanges occur safely at worldwide and regional level. Within this context, Patras has emerged

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<sup>238</sup> Informal conversation with A., Yemen, 01/06/2015.

as a transit port in the Adriatic region for both licit and illicit mobilities (Van Schendel and Abraham 2005), with ebb and flow related to the port logistics and the specific conditions of border management.

In particular, the chapter examined the historical developments of migrants' settlements and the changing patterns of their presence in the city, paying attention to the socio-spatial relations and conflicts that migrants have interwoven or sparked. I argued that the porosity of the border, which allows and regulates the gradual inclusion of mobile and cheap labour force within the European space in step with "the speed of absorption into the local labour markets" (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013; see also De Genova 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012; Cheliotis 2016), coupled with the specificity of Patras, which attracts migrants to the possibility of living inexpensively and leaving independently, have made the city a valid escape route towards Italy and the rest of Europe. In this sense, the chapter reconstructed migrants' re-appropriation of spaces within the urban context, from their sporadic and scattered presence in abandoned buildings or stations in the early 1990s to the construction and development of more organised settlements in the proximity of the port. Ethnographic research unveiled the everyday conditions within the abandoned factories that groups of Sudanese and Afghan migrants have squatted after the relocation of port activities in the southern periphery of the city, creating and shaping their own living space in the daily attempt to sneak underneath lorries and reach other European destinations.

The chapter argued that the factories represent an alternative space that counteracts the logistical configurations of global mobility and the governmental apparatus of security measures and migration policies. Whereas security controls, migration and asylum policies, and police checks regulate the mobilities of migrants through mechanisms of detention, deportation, and confinement, migrants perform invisibility or retain their irregular status as counter-hegemonic tactics to eschew the strict classist and racialized controls imposed on their bodies. Despite the despicable living conditions in the factories, often deprived of electricity, heating and basic amenities, migrants have re-appropriated (Lefebvre 1991) and readapted these empty spaces to their exigencies and needs (Hammond 2004), enacting practices of cooperation and solidarity while negotiating, contesting and resisting bordering measures.

For most migrants the factories represent, in essence, transit places in which to live with little economic resources available; where to hide from police checks and

intrusions; and to recreate or expand their social networks. The division into groups and the partition of everyday activities according to a rotational basis allow for a better allocation of the few resources available and the participation of every person into the economic and social life of the group: every migrant can join the group life without being asked for particular contributions. Practices of solidarity also extend to victims of accidents and newcomers, the latter being readily welcomed within the group and taught the techniques to successfully cross the border. The peculiar topography of the port area has sharpened migrants' knowledge of the methods to cross the border or of the places where to easily hide from police interventions (see Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos 2016). Common areas let migrants relax, chat with each other, pray, and play together, wiping away national or ethnic distinctions. These characteristics have made the abandoned industrial area in front of the new port of Patras not only a persuasive dwelling option for migrants willing to carry on their journey towards northern Europe, but also a living space that migrants have created and moulded to escape the logics of capitalist production and the securitisation measures behind them.

In the belief that autonomy results from heteronomy (Samaddar 2005), the chapter attempted to eschew a romanticised or over-politicised analysis of migrants' everyday life, unveiling how class, ethnic, and social processes constantly intertwine, reproducing divisions among and within migrants. The possibility of mobilising multiple capitals – from economic resources to social networks – differentiates migratory trajectories and patterns, as well as migrants' everyday experiences inside the factories. The suspended waiting times of the asylum responses prompt some migrants to invent petty economic activities in order to sustain themselves, although the alternation between the participation in the informal labour market and the enforcement of social reproductive activities creates a vicious cycle of social instability and economic precariousness. Whereas invisibility is sometimes employed as a strategy to subvert the perverse mechanisms of the European border and migration regime, in some cases it becomes a social status in which migrants are forcibly relegated, hindering not only their mobility but also their material existence in the urban or national context.

It is upon these multiple and intertwining nuances, I argue, that the concept of borders as “meeting points” should be constructed, acquiring its theoretical and empirical relevance. This concept appears useful to interpret and analyse the

multifarious relationships, interconnections, and struggles between the agential forces of migrant mobilities and the structural processes that tend to govern and regulate them, without nonetheless romanticising migrants' collectivity or over-emphasising the socio-political unity of their claims. In this respect, the chapter examined not only the practices of solidarity among migrants and the tactics adopted to defy the border regime, but also how class, ethnic, and social divisions permeate migrants' groups, producing bordering demarcations within and among them. Far from being predetermined or fixed, migrant subjectivity needs to be constructed and crafted through the everyday networks and struggles that migrants perform, discerning and preserving their heterogeneities and the inherently political character of their claims.

## 7 Conclusion

Exile, immigration, and the crossing of boundaries are experiences that can therefore provide us with new narrative forms or... with *other* ways of telling.

Edward W. Said 1989, *Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors*.

### *Crises | Laboratory | Exit*

Over the last two decades, the European project has endured a series of multiple and intertwining “crises” that have shaken it to its very foundations, with profound repercussions on its border and migration regime (De Genova and Tazzioli 2016; De Genova, Garelli, and Tazzioli 2018). The 9/11 terrorist attacks suddenly revealed a latent security deficit that could have been bridged over only through strengthened bordering measures, conveying a psychological sense of protection among the population and constructing an image of order (Andreas 2009; W. Brown 2010). A backlash of neoliberal globalisation (Harvey 2011b), the 2008 global financial crisis has had a detrimental impact on the European economy, providing a breeding ground for (often likewise destructive) state interventions over public policy and everyday life. The unprecedented arrival of more than one million migrants within the European territory in 2015 has put at stake the whole European border and migration regime, while intensifying the protective appeal of nationalist discourses.

Rather than simply depicting an unexpected and abrupt change of events, the rhetoric of the “crisis” often legitimises and imposes drastic measures either to restore the status quo or to launch new socio-political or economic projects. Just as economic crises, “essential to the reproduction of capitalism” (Harvey 2014:ix), forge renovated and stronger relations of domination, so migration crises seem to be purposefully “fabricated” (Rajaram 2015; see also Bojadžijev and Mezzadra 2015) in order to create a situation of alleged exception, where states can actively intervene to re-regulate the mobility of people, re-establish their control over the body of refugees, and re-assert the sovereignty over their territory. As Helles et al. (2016) put it,

“Labeling a complex situation (such as that of the contemporary dynamics of mass migration and refugee movements) as a ‘crisis’ and therefore as ‘exceptional’ tends to conceal the violence and permanent exception that are the norm under global capitalism and our global geo-politics, and may serve to perpetuate the conditions that have led to the purported ‘emergency’ in the first place”.

As Kasparek argues (2016; see also Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), the European management of the financial and migratory crises has entailed overlapping patterns of

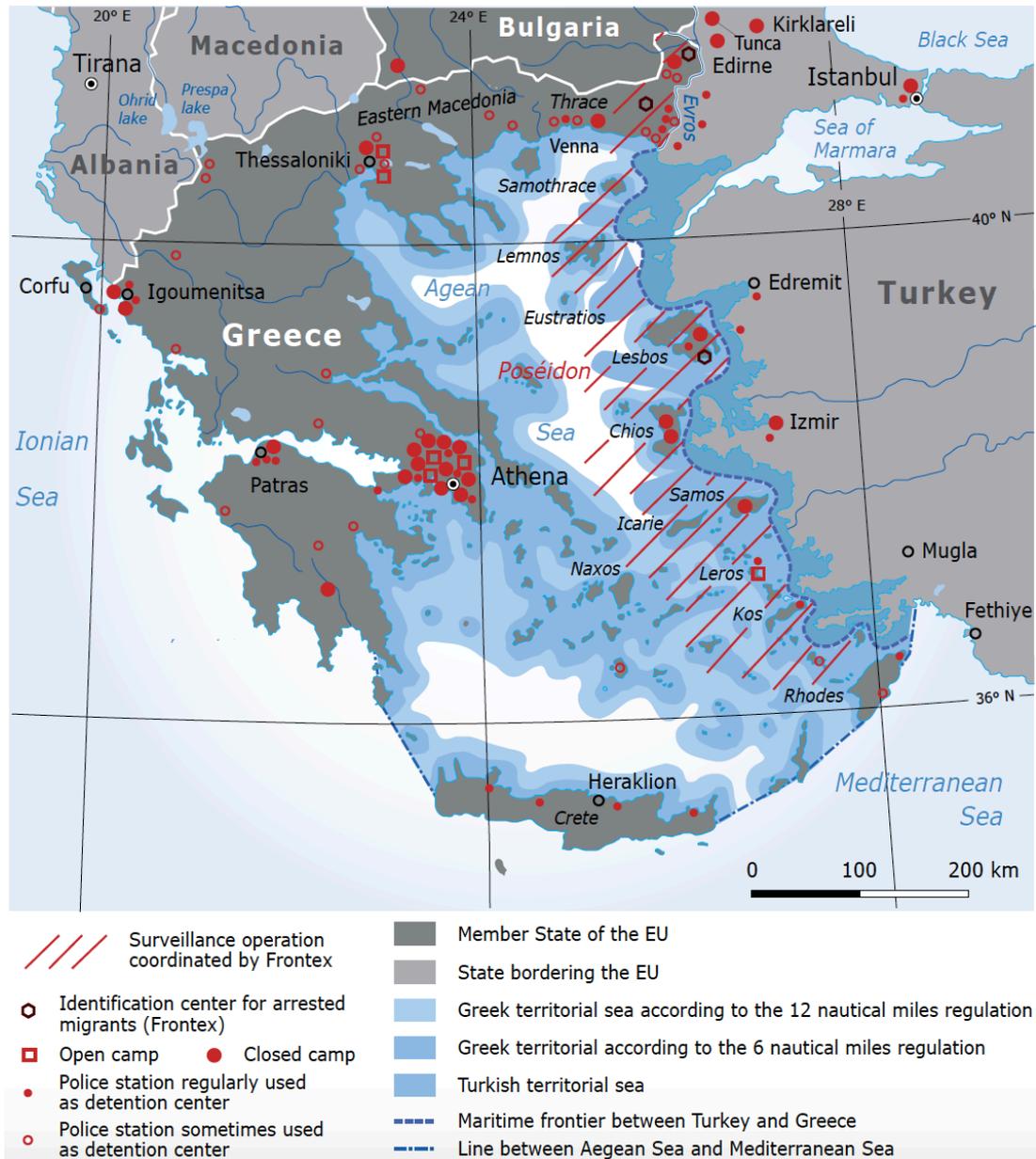
coercive regulations and practices that permeate arbitrarily-created spaces of exception in order to produce new border and labour regimes. The emergence of multiple and transversal crises within Europe has in fact ignited a series of socio-political and economic rescue plans aimed at, on the one hand, bailing out insolvent countries while imposing harsh austerity packages on them (Lapavitsas et al. 2010) and, on the other hand, regulating the flows of migrants across and within the EU while erecting new apparatuses of control and in/exclusion (De Genova and Tazzioli 2016).

In a crisis-ridden Europe, migrants are caught in the grips between an economic/secitarian logic that entraps them in a highly precarious and criminalised status, and a humanitarian discourse that problematises them as victimised individuals (Squire 2017; De Genova, Garelli, and Tazzioli 2018; Garelli, Sciarba, and Tazzioli 2018). Whereas the former envisages migrants' progressive and selective inclusion as exploitable and deportable workforce within the European labour market (De Genova 2008; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012), the latter considers them as passive subjects, in need of humanitarian protection as well as of juridical and political domination. Often conflating or disguising their scopes (Garelli and Tazzioli 2016), both regimes operate for a logistical circulation of migrants across and within the European space, reinforcing a biopolitical control on their bodies (Mezzadra 2016).

For its particular position, at the crossroad between multiple historical, geopolitical and economic trajectories (see Fouskas and Dimoulas 2013), Greece represents the archetypical "meeting point" of the different crises, making it a perfect "laboratory" for the implementation of containment policies. As the most affected country in Europe, Greece has become "the laboratory for particularly brutal austerity policies" dictated by its creditors, namely the EC, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (*ibid.*:7).

Being one of the main gateways for migratory movements into the EU, its oriental border has turned into a "laboratory" for the operational work of FRONTEX (FIDH, Migreurop, and EMHRN 2014), in particular after the intensification of surveillance mechanisms along western and central Mediterranean borders (Gregou 2014). Operating in a blurred legal space, where European and national geopolitical interests intersect and superimpose on migration and asylum regulations, FRONTEX employs its technical and apolitical expertise to prevent, identify, and repulse irregular

migrant flows, in close contact with Greek and European authorities. The activities of the agency have not simply pertained to the enforcement of external border controls, but also combined with a series of identification, detention, and deportation measures for irregular migrants (see Figure 48) that have shaped the geographies of migrant mobility into the European space.



**Figure 48: Area of intervention of FRONTEX and dislocation of identification and detention centres for migrants.**  
Source: FIDH, Migreurop, and EMHRN 2014.

With the burst of what has been defined as “migrant crisis” (Bojadžijev and Mezzadra 2015; De Genova et al. 2016), Greece has eventually emerged as a “European laboratory of migration policies” (Tazzioli 2017b). The unexpected arrival of hundreds of thousands of migrants have accelerated intergovernmental debates on

migration management at European level, with Greece at the centre of the stage. The strengthening of FRONTEX operations, the implementation of the hotspot approach for the quick identification of asylum seekers, the introduction of the quota system for their relocation within the EU, and the EU-Turkey deal for the expulsion of rejected asylum seekers have *de facto* reinforced the European process of admission, selection, detention, circulation, and deportation of migrants within the European space, with an important role fulfilled by those countries (in particular Italy and Greece) along the external borders of the EU (Garelli and Tazzioli 2016; Campesi 2018). The “crisis” has provided the political framework for the inclusion of certain categories of migrants within the European space and its labour market, while erecting, on the other hand, new physical and psychological barriers for the sake of security of the EU and its citizens.

In this context of economic insecurity and securitised mobilities, migrants are not always the docile and dominated subjects that European institutions and national governments would like them to be. The latest migration influx has put at stake the entire European border and migration regime, freezing the implementation of both Schengen and Dublin Conventions, and compelling member states to reach an agreement over the long-debated issue of refugee quotas. From Lesvos to Calais, from Ventimiglia to Ceuta and Melilla, migrants have challenged the European border and migration regime by eluding or disrupting its pervasive mechanisms of control, practicing invisibility and illegality as a tactic, or openly defying and protesting against the detention and deportation systems (Mezzadra 2011b; Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Tazzioli 2017a). Far from determining (or representing the object of) the crisis, migrants have stood out as political subjects claiming their freedom of movement within a European space where borders and border-zones continuously multiply (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). In so doing, they have unveiled a deeper wound in the European political project, thus revealing where the crisis actually is (Apostolova 2015; Bojadžijev and Mezzadra 2015).

Here lies, I argue, the epistemological hinge that supports an understanding of “migration as a social movement in the literal sense of the words, not as a mere response to economic and social malaise” (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008:202). Just as the proletariat could finally become conscious of its own class condition and extricate itself from the chains of mystification and deception with which the state and the bourgeoisie have historically tried to tether it, so migrants can

potentially gain awareness of the oppressive regime that regulates their access, circulation, detention, and deportation within the European space. Through a series of organised and interconnected struggles, migrants can eventually lay the groundwork for a process of dis-alienation from the socio-political and economic structures in which they are embedded (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Mezzadra 2011b).

It is in the everyday articulation of the border, I have argued, that all these different processes come to life, assuming specific spatio-temporal configurations that continuously delineate and configure – while being delineated and configured by – the border itself. The border, whether considered as the whole Greek territory or as more local spatial conformations, condenses a multiplicity of threads, networks, and procedures that unfold in uneven, variegated, and sometimes conflictual ways, generating different patterns across space and time. The border tends to reproduce the repetitive, homogeneous yet fragmented spatio-temporal configurations of capitalist development onto the everyday life of people. On the other hand, national or global socio-economic and geopolitical stances are constantly mediated with local, personal everyday claims, unleashing a whole series of negotiations, contradictions, and struggles that reconfigure, challenge, and contest the bordering process. Just like the urban for Lefebvre, so the border represents a “point of convergence and an ‘ensemble of differences’” (Kipfer 2008:204; see also Lefebvre 1996).

#### *New encounters | new clashes*

In the specificity of the port/border area of Patras, the border has acquired the contours of a “meeting point” of several, intertwining and contrasting processes: neoliberal logistics practices, with their tendency to homogenise and flatten spatio-temporal barriers for the unbounded circulation of capital, information, commodities and people; securitisation measures, with their obligation to protect logistical networks through the filtering and selection of authorised mobilities; and migrants’ autonomy, with their “creative force” (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008:203) that continuously defies and subverts through modest but highly political acts of resistance the European border and migration regime in which migrant mobilities are often entrapped.

Such processes, however, do not merely unfold in binary relations of one against each other: the idea of borders as “meeting points” does not necessarily imply a

struggle between dominant and subaltern spatio-temporal instances (see Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), nor an ahistorical and apolitical encounter among different agents (Cooper and Rumford 2011, 2013; Rumford 2013, 2014a, 2014b). Rather, it involves – and attempts to capture – the multiplicity and complexity of relations, contradictions, and conflicts that emerge from *within* each of the aforementioned processes. In this regard, the opposition of the municipality to claim the spaces of the old port, the pacific but highly significant re-appropriation of certain seafront areas, the migrant everyday struggles against the port policing, and the reproduction of class, ethnic and social divisions within migrant groups not only provide a more nuanced and situated perception of the multifarious dynamics occurring in the port/border area, but also allow to disassemble these processes, grasping their internal fractures and frictions.

Only by standing at the border, I have argued, it is possible to get a sense of the complex intermingling of such processes across the border, as well as of the peculiar configuration that the port/border area of Patras has acquired through time as a result of their continuous interrelations, networks, and struggles. The concept of borders as “meeting points” has precisely attempted to analyse the border as a place of convergence of all these processes, whose inner characteristics, mutual connections and inevitable conflicts have shaped the port/border area of Patras in its unique manner. Paraphrasing Massey’s definition of place (1994:154), so borders become:

“articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent”.

These “relations, experiences and understandings” are neither predetermined nor immovable, but assume different configurations across space and through time. When I went to Patras again in September 2017, new threads were indeed unfolding across the port/border area. The burst of the “migrant crisis” engendered a series of ambivalent policies, fluctuating procedures, and antithetical bordering measures that shaped the geography of mobility within and beyond Europe. The initial policy of openness towards refugees and opening of borders, accompanied by mass mobilisations and positive media coverage, soon made way for the reintroduction of border controls between member states, the suspension of the Dublin dispositions and the introduction of quotas, and the stipulation of arrangements with third countries to relieve the burden of migration and asylum issues, criminalised again after the terrorist

attacks in Paris in November 2015 and the sexual assault in Cologne during the following New Year's Eve celebrations.

With the closure of borders or, rather, their selective openness to specific nationalities, thousands of migrants remained stranded in Greece, compelled to find other (now irregular) ways to escape the country. While the small village of Idomeni at the border with North Macedonia hit the headlines for hosting about 15,000 migrants at the height of the crisis, even Patras regained traction as transit port towards Italy. At the end of my fieldwork in September 2015 there were only a few migrants left in the factories, while two years later about 400 people populated the two dismissed plants of AVEX and Ladopoulos, with significant implications at the level of the everyday.

The departing threads intersecting in Patras were this time different: although the majority of migrants were still from Afghanistan, I also encountered several from Pakistan (some of whom from Kashmir) and a small group of Algerians. According to migrants themselves, also Iraq and Syria were represented in the factories; yet, I did not meet any in the few weeks I was there. What I did notice, though, was the total absence of Sudanese migrants. Given the large number of migrants and the particular conformation of the AVEX complex, open on most sides, most of them were compelled to sleep rough, covered only by the towering roofs of the factory.

Other threads and patterns were instead completely new, revolutionising the everyday life inside the factories. The social networks among migrants and the subdivision along ethnic and national lines, just like two years earlier, facilitated the accommodation in specific areas. However, the internal organisation of the factories radically changed with the presence of what some migrants called “smugglers” – some of whom, with my great surprise, were in fact none other than a few Afghan people I had met during the fieldwork. Upon payment of a fee varying between €700 and €2,000, these smugglers could assure migrants of a safe place inside the factory and provide some help in stealthily entering the trucks parked inside the port area, provided that migrants themselves demonstrate their alacrity and obedience.

Another new thread was the presence of two international NGOs inside the factories<sup>239</sup>: foodKIND for the distribution of food and DocMobile for basic medical assistance. Although having divergent histories – the former is a Swiss organisation born from the initiative of two volunteers in Lesbos that wanted to “fill a gap” in the

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<sup>239</sup> See <https://youtu.be/v7gYD2GMHWQ?t=339>

humanitarian assistance by giving food to refugees, while the latter is a German organisation that started to operate in the factories in early 2017, soon after foodKIND – their patterns have interwoven in Patras, where the two NGOs work together and share the same base. A flat in the city centre of Patras functions as warehouse for the collection and sorting of donations and as kitchen for the preparation of meals, as well as a dormitory for the international volunteer tourists (see Wearing and McGehee 2013; Mostafanezhad 2014; Butcher 2015, 2017) that come to Patras for few weeks or even some months.

External threads continuously intertwine with local agents, negotiating their presence in the city and in the factories. The two NGOs indeed tried to get in touch with two local organisations (namely Kinisi and Praksis): although they managed to cooperate with some local volunteers on individual basis, they did not succeed in implicating the associations as a whole, thus remaining disconnected from the local social fabric. Even contacts with the municipality were scarce: during the period I was there, they were not even aware that two or three volunteers from the municipality would come every couple of days to distribute food at around noon, after they had left. What they needed and managed to do, however, was to negotiate – although slightly unexpectedly, according to their reconstruction – their access to the factories with the smugglers, through an informal lunch in one of the sheds inside the AVEX complex<sup>240</sup>.

As new threads were forming across the port/border area, others were necessarily changing and adapting to the mutable conditions. As Vale argues (2018), the staggering increase in the number of migrants around the port compelled local enforcement agencies to ask the national government to intervene and provide more funding and personnel to guarantee the security of the port. The increment in security staff and the intensification of security measures have not only reduced the already feeble chances to escape from the port, but have also augmented violent practices towards migrants (*ibid.*). As DocMobile denounced through a long Facebook post on January 18, 2018, acts of violence were increasingly perpetrated by local police forces and truck drivers alike, while OLPa was discussing with the central government about the possibility to erect a second set of protective fences and install an X-ray scanner.

Over a span of two years, several pieces in the border puzzle had changed, at global level with ever-changing migratory patterns, at European level with fluctuating bordering policies and practices, and at local level with the appearance of new agents

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<sup>240</sup> Field notes, 18/09/2017.

and organisms. New threads materialised and disentangled across the port/border area of Patras, negotiating their presence on the ground, while old ones either disappeared or adapted to renovated circumstances. As the border changed, also the personal experience of the researcher mutated, suddenly constrained in an even shorter period of time to deal with a myriad of variegated agents, forces, and relations that he had not expected to find. Like tidemarks, Green suggests (2012:585), borders “are traces of movement, which can be repetitive or suddenly change, may generate long-term effects or disappear the next day, but nevertheless continue to mark, or make, a difference that makes a difference”.

In the continuously developing border dynamics, only one thing seems immutable: the desire, willingness, and determination of migrants to challenge the European border and migration regime, liberate their inner potential, and finally fulfil their longstanding dream of building a new life somewhere else. Just as the border is the meeting point of multiple intertwining and conflictual processes, so the living body of the migrant becomes the meeting place of a wide smorgasbord of emotions, aspirations, passions and tumults that keeps migrants alive against all odds.

In the everyday life of the border all these dynamics, negotiations, contradictions and conflicts among and within a whole array of processes and agents come to the fore, acquiring a concrete, visible materiality that the researcher can eventually distinguish and capture. By standing at the border and observing these different processes intersecting across it, the researcher can also grasp the meanings of the different theories on borders and perceive their practical translation onto the ground. From the living materiality of borders, not only can the researcher assess the intertwining processes and relations occurring across them, but he can also have the sense of the epistemological positions employed to analyse them, with their advantages and shortcomings.

The border, I have argued, can inherit a distinct meaning, a new epistemological vitality as a “meeting point” of a complex variety of processes that converge and interact across it, producing variegated relations, connections, restrictions, and struggles. The concept of borders as “meeting points” would therefore allow, on the one hand, seizing the (various declinations in space and time of) socio-economic, political and legal processes behind the social production and continuous alteration of bordering practices while, on the other hand, capturing the everyday practices of negotiation, contestation, and resistance that border subjects organise and perform. In

acknowledging bordering as a highly heterogeneous and contested process, this concept provides a more nuanced perspective on how both structural processes and individual practices produce and shape borders, negotiating divisions and generating struggles. Far from being impartial and comprehensive, the concept of borders as “meeting points” would like to be an open invitation for border scholars to avail themselves of ethnographic research and to reassess the theoretical standpoints and preconceptions that not infrequently drive research paths.

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