

GENDERED BORDERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: WOMEN IN MORIA REFUGEE
CAMPS IN LESVOS, GREECE THROUGHOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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A thesis submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in
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ABSTRACT

Maura Kitchens West: Gendered Borders of the European Union: Women in Moria
refugee camps in Lesbos, Greece throughout the COVID-19 pandemic
(Under the direction of Banu Gökariksel)

This thesis examines the role of gender in European bordering practices and demonstrates the lived experiences and discrimination of women migrants in Lesbos, Greece before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Utilizing a feminist geopolitical approach, the thesis will analyze how gender, race, class, ethnicity, and marital and parental status affect refugees and asylum seekers' lived experiences in border spaces, particularly in Moria and Moria 2.0 refugee camps, demonstrating that gender is an overlooked analytical lens in border studies. This thesis will review how bordering practices disadvantage women migrants at every step of the bordering process, evaluating structural decisions made by the European Union (EU) and their drivers, which reproduce and deepen bordering structures and place refugees and asylum seekers in precarious situations. Within these spaces of uncertainty, women are the predominant victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), experience heightened health issues both in transit and at destinations, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and their distinct privacy and space needs are not met. Using Europe's formerly largest refugee camp, Moria camp in Greece, and the (re)construction of Moria 2.0 camp as a case study, the thesis will discuss EU decisions which overlook women's experiences at borders, drawing on affirmative biopolitics to

demonstrate women refugee and asylum seekers' active survivorship in precarious situations, by demonstrating that 'life goes on' in Moria and Moria 2.0.

Key words: gender, women, borders, Moria, Moria Jungle, Moria 2.0, COVID-19

To Bachi.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU	European Union
PRS	Protracted Refugee Situation
RIC	Reception and Identification Centre
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

Gender differences become amplified in border regimes, demonstrating the authority of borders and scalar geographies of oppression. This paper evaluates how political systems reproduce and deepen bordering structures and geopolitical border regimes while reducing refugees and asylum seekers to a status considered less than human, or a 'problem' that needs to be solved. Women's needs in particular are neglected, and their vulnerabilities are deepened under violent border regimes; this thesis will provide insights as to why women's distinct needs are not met and how their vulnerabilities are exacerbated during bordering processes. In particular, I highlight the broad discrepancies in gendered bordering practices performed in Europe. The primary goal of my thesis is, in concordance with the premise of feminist geography, to highlight and deconstruct global geographies, but also provide insights into "building alternative futures."¹ The number of refugee camps in Europe has risen dramatically in the last two decades. As of mid-year 2021, Europe hosted 6,847,995 refugees and 1,039,931 asylum seekers, the majority of whom reside temporarily in Turkey. Greece additionally hosts many incoming asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants.² When evaluating bordering practices along migratory routes, one must consider the specific places and

¹ Hyndman, Jennifer. "Towards a Feminist Geopolitics." *The Canadian Geographer* 45, no. 2 (2001): 213.

² UNHCR Refugee Population Statistics Database. UNHCR. Available at: <<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=l8kb9M>> Accessed 30 March 2021.

spaces in which bodies are bordered and where bordering acts are performed. This thesis evaluates Moria camp in Greece; one of the primary spaces for bordering activities within the European Union (EU).

The introduction of my thesis will briefly review refugee camps in Europe and Greece and define refugees and asylum seekers. Chapter 1 of my thesis will introduce feminist geopolitics as a theoretical framework, provide a brief historical overview of migration in and around Europe over the last decade, and highlight previous research on the subject. I will outline the major structural decisions by the EU which create a violent border regime, reviewing general concepts such as the 'refugee crisis' and the crisis narrative, the Dublin Regulation, the EU-Turkey Statement, the general rise of the far-right and its implications on migration discourse, and the establishment of refugee camps around Europe, and their respective broad implications for women asylum seekers and refugees. This section will provide a basic understanding of how European bordering policies and decisions have created unsafe conditions for women to safely seek asylum even after arriving on European soil. The scope of this thesis reviews EU-level immigration and border policies and how they affect women in Lesbos, Greece; it should be acknowledged, however, that member states within the EU implement differing immigration and border policies. Germany and Greece, for example, differ in both immigration policy and enforcement.

Gender is often overlooked in border and refugee studies. Bordering practices in Europe affect women migrants differently, and gender is a necessary and underutilized analytical lens in refugee and border studies. My analysis of Moria camp in Lesbos in Chapter 2 will cover common themes such as bordering processes and agency as they

relate to gendered discrimination using feminist geopolitics. I will focus on women living in Lesbos, both in Moria camp and Moria 2.0 during the COVID-19 pandemic and how their living conditions, legal protections, and rights compare to those of refugees and asylum seekers internationally and in Greece. This case study will demonstrate the discrimination women migrants face at border sites and the physical toll bordering practices take on women's bodies. I draw on statistics on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in camps on the Aegean islands, statistics on health care and unsanitary conditions, interviews and other documentation of personal experiences as reflected in news articles about refugee camp inhabitants and, and a comparison of refugees' lived experiences and the legal policies of the EU, Greece, and international law on refugee protections. Quotes and experiences come from secondary sources, including news articles and social media, using keywords: gender, migration, Moria, Moria 2.0, COVID-19, and SGBV. The thesis will draw on secondary sources, including scholarship on the topic, news articles, and reports from NGOs and international organizations for a meta-analysis of conditions in Moria camp and Moria 2.0 camp. It will evaluate the juxtaposition of living conditions of women with their rights as outlined by the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the legal policies in place in the European Union and Schengen Area via the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in addition to stated objectives. I will also highlight women's active survivorship and affirmative biopolitics when placed in precarious situations, such as those in Moria and Moria 2.0.

COVID-19 has exacerbated existing issues that women migrants face, not only trapping some with perpetrators of SGBV due to lockdown measures, but also limiting

access to resources such as medical assistance, reporting mechanisms, justice, and other basic services.³ The COVID-19 pandemic has also enhanced anti-migration policies and xenophobic and particularly racist attitudes, especially with the closure of multiple borders and stricter border policies, which have led to the blame, stigmatization, and violence against ‘others’ who are depicted as “vectors of the disease”.⁴ Women have also borne the brunt of the unpaid care work burden, which has worsened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue daily struggles for survival, doing work especially inside the home or ‘home space’ in refugee camps.⁵

In this thesis, I will use a feminist geopolitical lens to evaluate the lived experiences of migrants in Moria camp and Moria 2.0. Not only are women migrants fleeing violence from war, but they are also actively oppressed throughout their quest for ‘freedom’, which they hope to find in Europe, and exploited regularly. The daily lives of women in refugee camps in Europe, particularly in Moria, are filled with harassment, neglect, and abuse; many women find it difficult to find communities of support in refugee camps and also face difficulties associated with isolation. Additionally, we are only able to evaluate the lived experiences of those women who successfully arrive at refugee camps in Europe because so many grievously perish on their transit journey. The mass grave that is the Mediterranean Sea illustrates precisely the power imbalance present for migrants fleeing to Europe; far too many of their lived experiences are death.

³ Gottardo, Carolina, and Paola Cymment. “How COVID-19 Affects Women in Migration.” Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, September 7, 2020.

⁴ Correa, Sonia. “Biopolitics & The COVID-19 Pandemic: Feminist Perspectives.” *DAWN Talks on COVID 19* (2020).

⁵ Gottardo, Carolina, and Paola Cymment. “How COVID-19 Affects Women in Migration.” 2020.

As if the enduring massacre in the Mediterranean were not enough, migrants, and women in particular, are subject to deadly violence in refugee camps, and insubstantial access to healthcare, only aggrandizing the bloodshed on Europe's hands. The European system of border securitization creates an interminable cycle for women migrants. In first facing persecution or discrimination in their home country, women make the difficult decision to flee. They are subsequently forced to risk their lives to cross the Mediterranean in hopes of making it to Europe via Greece. If successful in reaching Greece - many are not - women are subject to harrowing conditions both physically and psychologically, which include, but are not limited to unsanitary living conditions, lack of privacy and private spaces, limited access to healthcare, particularly menstrual and reproductive healthcare, access to menstrual products, and increased isolation along with the potential for human smuggling and exploitation.

Moria camp in Greece, as Europe's largest refugee camp until it burned down in September of 2020, represents one of Europe's often-overlooked failures- a cacophony of human rights violations perpetrated by a violent border regime, discriminatory migration policies, and general disregard for women's bodies. Despite being constructed to hold approximately 3,000 residents, Moria camp has seen over 20,000 residents at one time, half of whom are women and children.⁶ Moria camp's establishment, continuance, and dramatic shift to Moria 2.0 camp as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic present a pivotal frame of analysis to study the EU and Greece's

⁶ Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF). "Half of Moria Migrant Camp Population Is Women and Children, NGO Says." ekathimerini, September 20, 2018.

border policies and their tangible effects on human lives, as well as their particular disregard for the safety of women.

This research is necessary as the world and migrants in particular face new challenges as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic and climate change as contributory factors in the global migration scheme. The COVID-19 pandemic presents significant challenges for migrants, internal and external, and escalates existing weaknesses in border regimes across the globe, requiring further research into migrant rights, health, and border regimes in crisis, and particularly their respective effects on women. Moria and Moria 2.0 camps are interesting case studies because the original establishment of Moria emphasizes structural issues with the European response to migration, while the haphazard creation of Moria 2.0 camp highlights the neglect of women and girls under already-precarious conditions, and especially in crisis. Additionally, the fire on September 8, 2020, during COVID-19 at Moria camp, the largest refugee camp in Europe, on Greece's Lesbos island demonstrates refugee and asylum seeker vulnerability and catastrophic human rights abuses present in refugee camps around the world, particularly as they relate to women and girls.

Research Question

Conceptualizations and the implementation of borders raise the question of agency: Who is bordered? Who is performing bordering? How are individuals bordered? De Genova, author of *The Borders of Europe*, claims that, "If there were no borders, there would be no migration, only mobility," because migration has been constructed

and understood as crossing or transgressing a state-imposed border.⁷ Europe's violent border regime, therefore, does not stop at the demarcated external lines of the Schengen Area and Europe, more broadly. But rather, infringes upon migrants within their places of origin, following them through the whole transit process.

This thesis will address the question of how borders and bordering practices evaluate, classify, and restrict women and their bodies. I hypothesize that overlooking gender differences in addition to gender-based violence in spaces of exception puts women refugees and asylum seekers in more vulnerable positions. I argue for the need to consider gender as a key lens to study refugees and borders. Women are the predominant victims of SGBV, experience heightened health issues both in transit and at destinations, and their privacy and space needs are not met, in addition to experiencing 'double discrimination' as both migrants and women as well as running the risk of human trafficking. In addition, the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have disproportionately placed the burden of the crisis on women refugees and asylum seekers in refugee camps.

Refugee Camps in Europe and Greece

Europe was unprepared to host the massive influx of refugees over the last decade, in part due to a clear lack of coordinated policy, leading to the establishment of haphazard, low-quality temporary residences for refugees and asylum seekers. According to 2021 data from the Greek Ministry of Immigration and Asylum, Greece hosts 32 refugee accommodation facilities and six Reception and Identification Centres

⁷ De Genova, Nicholas, ed. *The borders of "Europe": Autonomy of migration, tactics of bordering*. Duke University Press, 2017. 6.

(RICs).⁸ Other southern EU member states, like Italy and Cyprus, host additional refugee camps. The majority of refugee camps that are used either for intake, or for both intake and deportation procedures, are located at the external borders of the Schengen area.

The United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a refugee camp as a,

Temporary [facility] built to provide immediate protection and assistance to people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution or violence. While camps are not established to provide permanent solutions, they offer a *safe haven* for refugees and meet their most basic needs such as food, water, shelter, medical treatment and other basic services - during emergencies.⁹

This definition paints refugee camps as a minimalistic, but relatively pleasant place of temporary residence during transit. However, the assumption that refugee camps are a temporary space of refuge is demonstrably flawed. Many refugee camps, which are intended for temporary housing relief, end up accommodating long-term displacement situations, in which refugees spend years - and sometimes decades - in camps due to protracted crises and lack of adequate support from host-country governments.

Contributing to this narrative, many host-country governments view care for and housing of refugees as charity work rather than justice work. In some cases, entire generations are born and raised within refugee camps, demonstrating the actual prolonged use of these so-called 'temporary spaces.' Long-term displacement is rising as conflicts become more protracted. Protracted Refugee Situations (PRS) are

⁸ Krithari, Elivira. "Mapping the Migrant Camps in Europe." Translated by L. Buhain and VoxEurop. European Data Journalism Network, April 29, 2021.

⁹ USA for UNHCR. "What Is a Refugee Camp? Definition and Statistics." USA for UNHCR. Accessed March 30, 2022. <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/>.

becoming more common; for example, Cooper's Camp, established in 1947 in West Bengal, India, houses 7,000 people 70 years later. Palestinian refugees on the West Bank, of which there are an estimated 750,000, have also been living in refugee camps since the 1940s. Infrastructure in both situations is inadequate, and does not meet the needs of women, and large numbers of inhabitants lack access to official papers even decades later. While more modern conflicts, such as the civil war in Syria, are too recent to be classified as PRSs, experts have significant concerns that the conflict situation and 'migration instability' will continue indefinitely.¹⁰

Turner argues that the refugee camp, "is an exceptional space, drawing from Agamben's 'spaces of exception' argument, that is put in place to deal with populations that disturb the natural order of things,"¹¹ drawing from Nyers' assertion that refugees are framed within a "problem-solving discourse"¹² and that languages of emergency are used to describe refugees.¹³ I.e., refugees are a 'problem' that needs to be solved, most likely as a result of exceptional situations such as natural disasters, wars, violence, and increasingly, climate change. This discourse, and its accompanying perceptions, indicate the "exceptional" state of refugee camps, in addition to their status as a legal black hole. Throughout this thesis, I approach refugees and refugee camps through the

¹⁰ Finch, Tim. "In limbo in world's oldest refugee camps: Where 10 million people can spend years, or even decades." *Index on Censorship* 44, no. 1 (2015): 53-56.

¹¹ Simon Turner, What Is a Refugee Camp? Explorations of the Limits and Effects of the Camp, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 29, Issue 2, June 2016, Pages 139–148, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fev024>

¹² Nyers, Peter. *Rethinking refugees: Beyond state of emergency*. Routledge, 2013.

¹³ Nyers, Peter. "Refugees, humanitarian emergencies, and the politicization of life." *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 17, no. 6 (1998): 16-21.

lens of Agamben's¹⁴ work by placing the *homo sacer*, "or person banned from society and denied all rights," at the center of this piece, and situate refugees and asylum seekers in refugee camps, considered 'spaces of exception,' as [spaces] and [bodies] included in the political order by being *excluded*."¹⁵ However, in addition to Agamben's argument, which places the refugee in a locked identity, I will draw on affirmative biopolitics to demonstrate women refugee's active survivorship in precarious situations, by demonstrating that life goes on in refugee camps.¹⁶

The temporal and spatial markers of refugee camps also act as tools to distinguish between the 'inside' and the 'outside,' creating a clear demarcation of belonging.¹⁷ Refugees in Moria camp are distinctly separated from the Greek citizens of Lesbos by both fences- physical borders- and curfews -imposed control mechanisms. Defining the borders of refugee camps solidifies an "us" and "them" mentality for host-country nationals as a form of 'othering' refugees by keeping them separate from the 'ideal or original people of a nation.'¹⁸

Defining Refugees and Asylum Seekers

According to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol,

¹⁴ Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford university Press, 1998.

¹⁵ Ramadan, Adam. "Spatialising the refugee camp." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38, no. 1 (2013): 65-77.

¹⁶ Nabi, Salim. *Invisible Lives as an Emerging Paradigm. COVID-19 and the Refugee Situation in Lesbos, Greece*. *Refugee Review*, vol. 5, forthcoming.

¹⁷ Turner, Simon. "What is a refugee camp? Explorations of the limits and effects of the camp." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 29, no. 2 (2016): 139-148.

¹⁸ Arato, Andrew, and Jean L. Cohen. "Civil society, populism, and religion." *Routledge handbook of global populism* (2018): 112-126.

[T]he term "refugee" shall apply to any person who[,] ... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of **his** nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail **himself** of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of **his** former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.¹⁹

The use of masculine pronouns in the legal language defining refugees is crucial, and subliminally suggests that women would not be granted the same legal protections. It is additionally striking that gender-based violence and discrimination do not qualify one to seek refugee status in this definition. In this thesis, I am typically referring to displaced people seeking refuge.²⁰ Both refugees and asylum seekers are present in Moria camp. Many of Moria's inhabitants have applied for asylum but have not yet been granted refugee status owing to lengthy processing times, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Greece models its asylum system on the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol,²¹ which is the most widely accepted set of international laws requiring countries to protect refugees.²² While the Protocol ensures rights for refugees, it fails to address the role of gender in refugee status. This deficiency is a significant problem with the international treaty, which does not recognize increased risk for women migrants. However, in Article 17 of Presidential decree 220/2007, Greece specified vulnerable asylum seekers as "unaccompanied children, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, as

¹⁹United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "The 1951 Refugee Convention and Its 1967 Protocol." UNHCR. UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency. Accessed March 30, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>.

²⁰ Sharif, Gemie. "Re-defining refugees: nations, borders and globalization." *Eurolimes* 9 (2010): 28-37.

²¹Papademetriou, T. "Refugee Law and Policy: Greece." In *Washington, DC: Library of Congress*. 2016.

²² UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol*, September 2011, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ec4a7f02.html> [accessed 31 March 2021]

well as persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence.”²³ While this specification recognizes some women at greater risk than other migrants, it fails to address the fact that all women are at inherent risk in refugee camps and throughout the migration process due to gender. Article 20 L 4540/2018 introduces additional classifications of vulnerable asylum seekers such as those with mental disorders and victims of female genital mutilation. Article 23 L 4540/2018 also altered the requirements and procedure for identifying those subject to torture, rape, or other forms of violence which qualify one for protected vulnerable status. However, it should be noted that this amendment faces heavy criticism because providers in reception centers and hospitals are not properly trained to identify possible victims of torture, thereby rendering the provision ineffective.

Effectively, women must have already experienced *visible* suffering in order to ‘deserve’ the opportunity for expedited asylum procedures. Worthiness to enter mainland Greece in this situation dictates that women must be perceived as victims to deserve the opportunity for a better life. The invisible processes of bordering in which women face discrimination, sexual harassment, and apathy is not perceived as enough for them to justify entrance into Europe, but rather reflects Europe’s desire to help the ‘victims’ and ‘voiceless’. The notion that Europe is morally responsible for stereotypical victims is reminiscent of imperialist philosophies, signaling no authentic progress in recognizing or rectifying colonial and imperialist ideologies, deepening the burden on colonized and oppressed peoples. Emphasis on the ‘deserving victim’ generates a

²³ Tsipoura, V., Aik. Drakopoulou, V. Fragkos, V. Kerasiotis, Aik Komita, El. Koutsouraki, K. Nikolopoulou, et al. “Country Report: Greece.” Edited by European Council on Refugees and Exiles. Asylum Information Database (aida), November 2015. 25.

catch-22 in which women who were visibly harmed prior to entering a country of supposed refuge in Europe are provided special status, leaving other women at increased risk of violence and maltreatment in refugee camps and other detention centers within Europe or rejected from entering its borders. There is no safe place for any woman in the bordering process.

While classifications of specific vulnerable populations are important steps in creating a more equitable transition for refugees in Greece, failure to address the inherent discriminatory and violent risk women face in refugee camps on both a legislative and practical level further perpetuates a vicious cycle of burden women face in each step of the bordering process. The Greek Action Plan on Asylum established its First Reception Service with Law 3907, which guarantees “immediate sustenance needs of migrants” and provides screening procedures to identify vulnerable individuals and offer medical care. According to L 4375/2016, whether an applicant is in need of special procedural guarantees is for the Asylum Service to assess

within a reasonable period of time after an application for international protection is made,” and especially, “when there are indications or claims that he or she is a victim of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence....Concerning female applicants, special efforts should be made so that the interview is conducted by a specialised female interviewer and that a female interpreter is present.”²⁴

Although the Greek asylum system has a *policy* of providing support to vulnerable populations and providing livelihood support, in *practice* conditions and rights of both refugees and asylum seekers remain subpar and relatively unchanged. For example, to be classified as a vulnerable asylum seeker, one must undergo a medical/ psychosocial

²⁴ Tsipoura, V., Aik. Drakopoulou, V. Fragkos, V. Kerasiotis, Aik Komita, El. Koutsouraki, K. Nikolopoulou, et al. “Country Report: Greece.” Edited by European Council on Refugees and Exiles. Asylum Information Database (aida), November 2015. 247.

vulnerability assessment. The average wait time for a refugee to receive an evaluation on Lesbos can range from at least 2-6 months or longer. This waiting period is both a period of uncertainty, in which vulnerable people and women in particular face increased levels of anxiety surrounding a decision, but also additional time in which they are subject to unacceptable refugee camp conditions in Moria. During the waiting period, refugee women are subject to unsanitary living conditions, lack of healthcare, violence, and psychological trauma.²⁵

The asylum system for vulnerable populations is remarkably ineffective, leaving the state of 'regular' asylum seekers unimaginable. In introducing special protections to the aforementioned vulnerable populations such as pregnant women, many 'regular' asylum seekers, who are equally as deserving of rights and protections granted by the Geneva Convention, are subject to further trauma. In addition, while setting aside specialized and targeted procedures for vulnerable populations is certainly important, the heavy focus on helping the "destitute" and "most-vulnerable" perpetuates a discourse of 'deservingness' and emphasizes the role of Europe as the 'savior.'

Women in the Family Unit

Women have been consistently classified as dependents or part of a family rather than individuals in their own right.²⁶ This classification only furthers the struggles women face in mobility and crossing borders. Women are treated as mothers or

²⁵ International Rescue Committee, Danish Refugee Council, network for children's rights, Association for the Social Support of Youth, Terre des hommes, FENIX, Positive Voice, et al. "For A Europe That Truly Protects." ChildHub, May 2021.

²⁶ Morokvasic, Mirjana. *Migration, gender, empowerment*. Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2009. 69.

daughters and only in relation to men and only as their role in the family, which enhances the divergent characteristics of gender roles in transit migration.

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees along with many other forms of legislation on the status of refugees classify women as part of a family unit. The 1951 Convention, in particular, demonstrates the rights of male refugees, using solely masculine pronouns and dictating the nature of a male as the head of household. For example,

Noting with satisfaction that, according to the official commentary of the ad hoc Committee on Statelessness and Related Problems (E/1618, p. 40), the rights granted to a refugee are extended to members of **his** family,
Recommends Governments to take the necessary measures for the protection of the refugee's family especially with a view to:
(1) Ensuring that the unity of the refugee's family is maintained particularly in cases where the head of the family has fulfilled the necessary conditions for admission to a particular country,
(2) The protection of refugees who are minors, in particular unaccompanied children and girls, with special reference to guardianship and adoption.²⁷

In this passage, it is evident that the perception of a refugee as an individual woman in 1951 was inconceivable. Most laws have not changed, nor have additional safeguards been put in place that protect women internationally. Women's right to refugee status is only protected under the assumption that they are included in a family unit rather than as individuals in their own right. The nature of this wording sets a dangerous precedent for women who experience SGBV in their home country, forced marriage, or human trafficking and are applying for refugee status. If, in fact, violence was perpetrated by a member of her family unit, she is not necessarily granted protections under this Charter.

²⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "The 1951 Refugee Convention and Its 1967 Protocol." UNHCR. UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency. Accessed March 30, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>.

CHAPTER 1

Feminist geopolitics

As a more recently established branch of critical geopolitics, feminist geopolitics provides a framework through which to understand power relations at different scales across spaces and places.²⁸ According to Jennifer Hyndman, "Feminist' in this context refers to analyses and political interventions that address the unequal and often violent relationships among people based on real or perceived differences."²⁹ Feminist geopolitics critically engages the nature of geopolitical power and demonstrates the role of power imbalance in the day-to-day lives of real people.³⁰ The branch of feminist geopolitics evaluates individuals and community units, reframing centers of action on the global scale. This analysis demonstrates that geopolitical power relations are reproduced in all areas of life, not solely in war and on the global scale, but also in the home and other communities like refugee camps and migration routes.³¹ Feminist scholars continuously demonstrate how geopolitical processes affect every day experiences and interactions, thereby exposing and evaluating discursive identities and

²⁸ Massaro, Vanessa Jill Williams. (2013), Feminist Geopolitics. *Geography Compass*, 7: 567-577. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12054>

²⁹ Hyndman, Jennifer. "Towards a Feminist Geopolitics." 210-222.

³⁰ There are many different feminisms, and I do not want to isolate this broad range. This definition is merely a reflection of a few types of feminisms woven together.

³¹ Williams, Jill and Vanessa Massaro. "Feminist Geopolitics: Unpacking (in)Security, Animating Social Change." *Geopolitics* 18, no. 4 (2013): 751-758.

lived realities of communities and individuals.³² This thesis focuses on real and perceived classifications of women migrants and everyday experiences, highlighting reproduced power relations based on the violent European border regime. It is important to note that feminist geopolitics is not exclusive to the study of women, but rather evaluates extensive power imbalances such as racialization in society and discrimination based on nationality, sexuality, race/ethnicity, caste, and ability. In this sense, the framework at hand evaluates “feminist geographies of difference,”³³ highlighting power imbalances and postcolonial feminisms. “Feminist geopolitics makes the relationship between the intimate and the global evident.”³⁴ This thesis utilizes feminist geopolitics to highlight the structural violence the European border regime both inflicts directly and reproduces at smaller scales, having evaluated both the legal discrimination of migrants from a broad European securitization perspective, as well as examining the the traumatic lived experiences of migrants whose lives are permanently altered by discriminatory policies, procedures, and attitudes in their everyday lives. The evaluation of the lived experiences of women migrants in Greece in this analysis highlights specifically “the ways in which the nation and the international are reproduced” in everyday practices due to bordering.³⁵

³² Massaro, V.A. and Williams, J. (2013), Feminist Geopolitics. *Geography Compass*, 7: 567-577.

³³ Pratt, Geraldine, and Victoria Rosner. "Introduction: The global & the intimate." *Women's Studies Quarterly* (2006): 13-24.

³⁴ Mountz, Alison, and Jennifer Hyndman. "Feminist approaches to the global intimate." (2006): 446-463.

³⁵ Dowler, Lorraine, and Joanne Sharp. "A feminist geopolitics?." *Space and Polity* 5, no. 3 (2001): 171.

Bordering processes

Scholarship on borders and more recently, bordering practices, has transitioned from a state-centric approach with the exclusive study of state borders, to a process-driven analysis relating time, space, and power relations to the geographies of border spaces. The idea of the 'border' is no longer restricted to the tangible proximity of space to a demarcated boundary enforced by nation-states, but rather a filter with "highly variable degrees of permeability or porosity."³⁶ Most scholars argue that borders arise as a distinct result of territoriality, which is defined by Flint and Taylor as "behaviour that uses bounded spaces to control activities." This definition, unlike previous scholarship, does not inherently assume a state-centric model of territoriality, enhancing our understanding of non-state actors in border studies.³⁷ Thus, both the EU, Greece, local authorities, and other stakeholders in the European and global border regimes can and do impose bordering processes upon migrants. While scholarship on borders has shifted from a state-centric approach, the field still lacks comprehensive intersectional analysis, particularly including that on gender.

Anderson and O'Dowd suggest that border regions act as peripheries of infiltration, transition, or separation when analyzed in the context of bordering practices. Though this paper discusses the predominantly exclusionary power of borders and how

³⁶ Anderson, James and Liam O'Dowd. "Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality: Contradictory Meanings, Changing Significance." *Regional Studies* 33, no. 7 (1999): 596.

³⁷ Flint, Colin, and Peter J. Taylor. *Political geography: World-economy, nation-state and locality*. Routledge, 2018. 351.

they are gendered, notably, those in Europe, it should be noted that borders can also stand for empowerment and inclusion in rare cases.³⁸

Borders look inwards and outwards: they simultaneously unify and divide, include, and exclude. They are coercive, disabling and limiting, including and excluding many people against their will; but they are also benign and enabling, providing the basis for security, dominant forms of identity and conventional representative democracy. 'Prison' or 'refuge,' they can facilitate oppression or provide an escape from it.³⁹

Some borders provide refuge; for example, Ukrainian asylum seekers fleeing the Russian invasion in 2022 are able to get out of an active war zone by entering Poland and other neighboring countries. However, the vast majority of borders are purposefully limiting, and crossing borders, particularly those of states, is heavily reliant on identity. Both economic status as well as education play a role in gaining passports to transverse national borders; in addition, nationality and ethnicity heavily influence the ability of some persons to obtain visas to certain countries. In some cases, gender is also an influential identity piece that influences the ability of individuals to travel.

Rumford outlines the nature of borders in the context of two broad theoretical approaches, which are not mutually exclusive. The first approach considers the border as a network, which is associated with ideas of "mobilities, flows, fluids, and scapes," and is key to understanding a "world in motion."⁴⁰ On the other hand, borders can also be evaluated through their context in societal transformations and spatialities of politics. In terms of the European experience, it is also important to note that debordering and

³⁸ Anderson, James and Liam O'Dowd. "Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality." (1999): 598.

³⁹ Ibid. 596.

⁴⁰ Rumford, Chris. "Introduction: Theorizing Borders." *Journal of Asian and African Studies (Leiden)* 41, no. 3 (2006): 156.

rebordering practices occur simultaneously.⁴¹ While the European Union and Schengen Area opens and 'deborders' the internal free market in order to facilitate greater economic mobility, the space synchronously reinforces the external Schengen Area border, driving securitization and externalization of borders to exclude migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, and perceived terrorists.⁴² According to de Genova,

The ongoing crisis of European borders, therefore, corresponds above all to a permanent epistemic instability within the governance of transnational human mobility, which itself relies on the exercise of a power over classifying, naming, and partitioning migrants/refugees, and the more general multiplication of subtle nuances and contradictions among the categories that regiment mobility.⁴³

Border fortification that claims to protect against illegal human mobility disregards migrants' rights as it serves to force mobility towards more dangerous modes of passage like smuggling, which can be likened to slave-trading.⁴⁴ Many smuggling operations have been observed and thrive in the Mediterranean, one of the most dangerous migrant passages in the world, to take asylum seekers and refugees to Europe. FRONTEX and EU member state action to fortify borders, lengthen asylum and bureaucratic processes, and build physical walls and fences forces migrants into more dangerous situations with smugglers, who often target women.⁴⁵ Women are often exploited by smuggling and organized crime groups on the way to Europe,⁴⁶ and

⁴¹ Anderson, James and Liam O'Dowd. "Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality." (1999): 593-604.

⁴² Rumford, Chris. "Introduction: Theorizing Borders." *Journal of Asian and African Studies (Leiden)* 41, no. 3 (2006): 159-169.

⁴³ De Genova, Nicholas, ed. *The borders of "Europe"*: 2017. 9.

⁴⁴ De Genova, Nicholas. *The borders of "Europe."* 7.

⁴⁵ "Migrant Vulnerability to Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Evidence from the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Migration Routes." International Organization for Migration, December 22, 2017.

⁴⁶ Reitano, Tuesday. "Short-Term Wins, Long-Term Risks: Human Trafficking and People Smuggling in the Mediterranean Area." European Institute of the Mediterranean. IEMed., 2018.

Greece's refugee camps are a recruiting ground for smuggling networks and organized crime, exacerbating risk for women in the camps.⁴⁷

Bodies as Borders

It is evident that women live in discounted bodies. In the case of Moria refugee camp in Greece, otherwise known as Moria Jungle, women's specific bodily needs are not met, especially with regard to toileting, menstruation, privacy, healthcare, and protection against SGBV. According to Mbembe, acts of "partitioning space, offshoring and fencing off wealth, splintering territories, and fragmenting spaces," are 'borderizing bodies.'⁴⁸ The act of holding incoming refugees on separate islands in Greece, particularly on Lesbos and in Moria camp, demonstrates Greece and the EU's 'partitioning' of space and its offshoring of migrant bodies.

Borders are increasingly turned into mobile, portable, omnipresent and ubiquitous realities. The goal is to better control movement and speed, accelerating it here, decelerating it there and, in the process, sorting, recategorizing, reclassifying people with the goal of better selecting anew who is whom, who should be where and who shouldn't, in the name of security.⁴⁹

The EU and Greece have made the decision to restrict incoming migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, in the name of security; both entities cite physical security and protection against terrorism, as well as the security of European welfare systems as the reasoning behind restricting body movements of refugees and asylum seekers.

"'Borderization', [is] the process by which certain spaces are transformed into uncrossable places for certain classes of populations, who thereby undergo a process of racialization; places where speed

⁴⁷ Smith, Helena. "Refugees in Greek camps targeted by mafia gangs," *The Guardian*, 20 August 2016,

⁴⁸ Mbembe, Achille. "Bodies as borders." *From the European South* 4 (2019): 5-18.

⁴⁹ Mbembe, Achille. "Bodies as borders." (2019): 9.

must be disabled and the lives of a multitude of people judged to be undesirable are meant to be immobilized if not shattered."⁵⁰

Moria camp in Greece represents such a space where migrant bodies, particularly sea arrivals of asylum seekers and refugees, are restricted from entering mainland Greece, and isolated from the Greek population. These refugees and asylum seekers then enter a period of waiting, in which applications can take months to years to process. In the meantime, they live in precarious situations, particularly women, who do not have access to proper sanitation, healthcare, or basic services, reflecting what Mbembe describes as the 'borderizing' of bodies. Border casualties, and those in Moria camp, often arise from lack of access to critical health care during transit and obvious disregard for migrants and refugees' medical needs during detention and deportation.⁵¹ Mbembe's argument is clear and raises relevant questions; however, his proposal fails to mention, in addition to racialized borderization, gendered borderization practices. Women experience heightened vulnerabilities due to state bordering practices, especially those in Greece and on Lesbos in Moria camp, emphasizing the need for gendered analysis in border and refugee studies. Within feminist geopolitics, "a shift to the scale of the body enables an analysis of the way geopolitical processes are experienced unevenly across differently situated populations."⁵² Analyzing gender within refugee and border studies will improve analysis of differing groups under violent conditions.

⁵⁰ Mbembe, Achille. "Bodies as borders." (2019): 9.

⁵¹ De Genova, Nicholas, ed. *The borders of "Europe"*: 2017. 4.

⁵² Williams, Jill and Vanessa Massaro. "Feminist Geopolitics: Unpacking (in)Security, Animating Social Change." 751-758.

Refugee Crisis and the Crisis Narrative

Migration in and around Europe is certainly not a new phenomenon; however, recent media attention and consistent political discussions and media coverage indicate that migration is a central political issue facing European citizens and external migrants. When media and governments across Europe reference the 'Refugee or Migrant Crisis,' they are typically referring to a large arrival of refugees and migrants in 2015 along the Mediterranean that is perceived as an infringement upon Europe's borders. It should be noted that the language surrounding the 'refugee' or 'migrant crisis' is contested; many question the validity of labeling an influx of migrants as a crisis and suggest that such language has roots in both racism and 'othering.' Initially, the EU and especially Germany accepted asylum seekers and refugees; however, in 2014-2015, responses shifted when the 'crisis' was reframed as a 'European' crisis with predominant discourses focusing on how refugees and asylum seekers strained European economies and social welfare structures rather than refugees being in crisis themselves as they sought refuge from war and violence.

Migration to Europe through the Mediterranean is not uncommon, as outlined in *Destination Europe*, and an uptick in the amount of refugees entering Europe through its southern borders saw a statistically significant rise in 2011, rather than 2015 as a media onslaught would have the public believe.⁵³ The Syrian civil war began in March 2011, driving the number of refugees and migrants fleeing persecution into Europe. The Syrian conflict escalated in 2014 and 2015 as tensions intensified between moderate

⁵³ Crawley, Heaven, Simon McMahon, Katharine Jones, Franck Duvell, and Nando Sigona. "Destination Europe?: Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015." (2016).

rebel groups and ISIL, and Syria attempted a fair democratic election.⁵⁴ As the conflict intensified, the number of refugees fleeing Syria also rose, precipitating the substantial increase in the number of migrants fleeing to Europe and the deaths that followed as a result of broken migration systems internationally. Additional refugees from the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia have also traveled to Europe in search of asylum; large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees have also come to Europe from Afghanistan and Iraq due to instability.

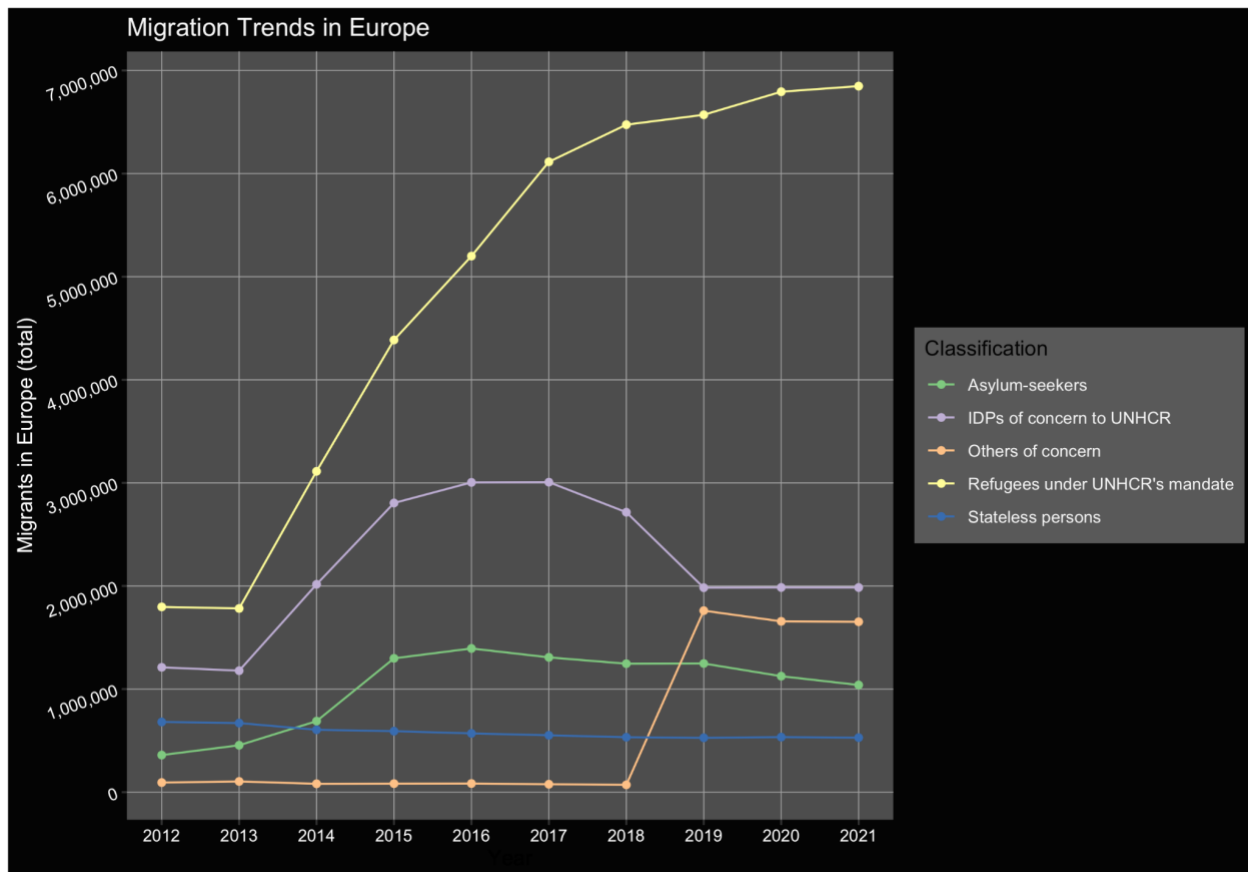
Reframing crises for political gain is not unique to migration in Europe, nor migration globally, like in the United States. Similar discourses surrounding the COVID-19 crisis have exacerbated violence and manipulation of vulnerable populations. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about similar racist discourse, with high-income countries blaming low-income countries for virus outbreaks, despite inadequate responses from high-income countries, like the United States or those in Europe. Martina Tazzioli highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on 'rebordering' the world, suggesting that "bordering is a technique of governing in the pandemic," which re-emphasizes the racialized, gendered, and socio-economic hierarchies present in society.⁵⁵ Refugees and asylum seekers became suspects during COVID-19 and are now seen as possible carriers of disease. In addition, bureaucratic processes either slowed down or completely halted during the initial throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant slower processing of asylum applications, lengthening waiting periods for

⁵⁴ International democracies dismiss this election as a farce. As few as 6 million eligible voters were left in Syria at the time and independent monitors were unable to attend polling stations.

⁵⁵ Aradau, Claudia, and Martina Tazzioli. "Covid-19 and rebordering the world." *Radical Philosophy* 2 (2021).

those in camps, especially those in Greece, and thereby lengthening periods of uncertainty regarding asylum claims. Women, especially those in refugee camps, experienced even more elongated waiting times in refugee camps in unsanitary conditions. Refugee camps, such as Moria, are often overcrowded; asylum seekers and refugees in camps cannot practice social distancing or realistically quarantine when presented with symptoms, especially when women are already afraid to toilet due to a lack of privacy.

Figure 1: Migration trends (totals) in Europe from 2012-2021 from UNHCR's Refugee Data Finder.⁵⁶



It is imperative when discussing the migrant crisis to ask: *for whom is this situation a crisis?* Rather than trying to solve the supposed issue of incoming migration in Europe, it is important to validate the lived experiences of persons fleeing their homes. Is an influx of refugees into Europe a true crisis? Europe frames incoming migrants as threats to both financial and physical security of European Union (EU) or Schengen Area citizens. Contextualizing the experience of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing persecution and violence is crucial in reframing the migration crisis. In

⁵⁶ UNHCR Refugee Population Statistics Database. UNHCR. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=l8kb9M> Accessed 30 March 2021.

addition, it is crucial, when contextualizing this migration, to also identify and include the distinct effects of these practices on women. The extensive humanitarian atrocities migrants face in leaving their homes for Europe only to find more brutality and violence is the true crisis, though it is not recognized as such. Studies on refugees and asylum seekers should increasingly be approached from a 'whole-trajectory' perspective, rather than just through origin and destination in order to highlight the lived experiences of those in transit, particularly those experiences migrants face as part of the violent global border regime.⁵⁷ Mbembe suggests that "borders are no longer merely lines of demarcation separating distinct sovereign entities. Increasingly, they are the name we should use to describe the organised violence that underpins both contemporary capitalism and our world order in general."⁵⁸ In reclassifying bordering practices and contextualizing migration and its drivers, it has become increasingly important to validate women's differing experiences, which are often ignored.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations agency for migration, nearly 4,000 of the total 1,011,712 estimated refugees and migrants that attempted to cross the Mediterranean in 2015 in search of a better life in Europe died on the trip.⁵⁹ Nicholas de Genova refers to the graveyard of migrant bodies in the Mediterranean as a European deathscape.⁶⁰ Refugees entering Europe

⁵⁷ Secor, Anna J., Patricia Ehrkamp, and Jenna M. Loyd. "The problem of the future in the spacetime of resettlement: Iraqi refugees in the US." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (2022).

⁵⁸ Mbembe, Achille. "Bodies as borders." *From the European South* 4 (2019) 5.

⁵⁹ International Organization for Migration. "Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean and Beyond: 2015 Report." International Organization for Migration. Displacement Tracking Matrix, 2016.

⁶⁰ De Genova, Nicholas. *The borders of "Europe."* 2.

through the Mediterranean became global news when a photograph of drowned three year old, Alan Kurdi, was published; his lifeless body washed ashore in Turkey along with his mother and brother after unsuccessfully attempting to reach Kos in Greece. Media outcry declaring the rising number of refugees attempting to reach Europe as a crisis set the stage for a political battle in Europe surrounding securitization and border externalization.⁶¹ Labeling this arrival of refugees as a 'crisis' effectively others asylum seekers and refugees, degrading their desire for a safer or better life for themselves and their families. Following the death of Alan Kurdi, media awareness of the situation of refugees in the Mediterranean increased and pressured the EU into pursuing options to 'combat' the crisis, like signing the EU-Turkey Statement. However, despite outrage at the unnecessary deaths of people attempting to find safety in Europe, the EU-Turkey Statement primarily gave funding to Turkey to hinder refugee access to Europe, demonstrating a fundamental lack of coherence in understanding the 'problem' and making it even more dangerous to cross the border into the EU, particularly for women. European member states and the EU often ignore refugees' livelihoods and force those seeking asylum to take more dangerous migratory routes, live in precarious situations, and falter economically. The EU and other European countries denounce mass migration to Europe while committing human rights violations against asylum seekers and refugees who are merely seeking a better life via safety, economic potential, or family reunification. Violent bordering practices such as these place migrants in

⁶¹ Fotopoulos, Stergios, and Margarita Kaimaklioti. "Media discourse on the refugee crisis: on what have the Greek, German and British press focused?." *European View* 15, no. 2 (2016): 265-279.

precarious and uncertain conditions, paving the way for further suffering of women refugees and asylum seekers.

Fortress Europe - Preserving Empire

The borders of Europe provide a unique forum for examination of externalization and securitization. With the radical shift from national to supranational borders, the European Union, and the Schengen Area more definitively, enforce border patrol practices within, around, and outside of the borders of the Schengen area, thereby bordering migrants at various stages of the migration experience. In transitioning towards a society with supposed free movement of people, goods, and ideas, the European Union effectively creates an insular empire known as 'Fortress Europe,' treating migrants and non-EU citizens as unsuitable to enter a predominantly Caucasian society. In its evolution to a supranational area without internal borders, the European Union has reinforced and intensified its external borders.

In Nicholas de Genova's introduction to *The Borders of Europe*, he claims that the EU's outsourcing of border policing precipitates more violence than even the deadly practices of Europe's internal border enforcement authorities.⁶² In response to the question, *who is performing bordering?* Europe has a convoluted set of answers. The EU and Europe at large have difficulties pinpointing and consolidating bordering practices, in particular violent ones, because countless entities perform acts of bordering: the EU, nation-states within the EU, non-member states, private capitalist enterprises, smuggling networks, humanitarian agencies. All of these examples and

⁶² De Genova, Nicholas, ed. *The borders of "Europe."* 2017. 4.

more make up the border regime which restricts movement of migrants, particularly women trying to enter Europe.⁶³

In *Riding Routes and Itinerant borders: Autonomy of Migration and Border Externalization*, Casas et al. claim that the failure of a coordinated EU response to irregular migrants produced the ad-hoc border regime the EU employs.⁶⁴ Europe restructures migration and manages migrants through externalization policies such as the EU-Turkey Statement and Operation Seahorse, in which FRONTEX, the European Border and Coastguard Agency, established bi- and multi-lateral agreements with multiple nations in Africa to secure European borders by preventing migration from 'origin countries'; the agency established offices and official presence in 'neighboring' countries in North Africa and 'neighbors-of-neighbors.'⁶⁵ FRONTEX is additionally cited as committing human rights violations for the sake of securitization of Europe. Securitization refers broadly to the processes whereby issues, spaces, and subjectivities become targets of regulation and surveillance by state and non-state actors⁶⁶ in the name of ensuring 'security' at multiple scales, most often the

⁶³ De Genova, Nicholas, ed. *The borders of "Europe."* 2017. 5.

⁶⁴ Casas, Cortes, Maribel, Sebastian Cobarrubias, and John Pickles. "Riding routes and itinerant borders: Autonomy of migration and border externalization." *Antipode* 47, no. 4 (2015): 894-914.

⁶⁵ Casas-Cortes, Maribel, Sebastian Cobarrubias, and John Pickles. "'Good neighbours make good fences': Seahorse operations, border externalization and extra-territoriality." *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23, no. 3 (2016): 231-251.

⁶⁶ Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver, Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde. *Security: A new framework for analysis.* Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998.

national.⁶⁷ Europe's primary bordering goal is state security rather than security of the individual.⁶⁸

In the case of Europe, the EU, FRONTEX, member states, and additional actors monitor, control, and surveil the status of refugees with fear mongering discourses meant to 'protect the European internal borderless zone.' Massaro and Williams emphasize the question, "who is made more secure by such geopolitical measures?"⁶⁹ In this case, the European border regime protects existing (and majority white) citizens and residents of Europe to the detriment of those trying to seek refuge.

The scales at which human security are imagined and experienced are multifaceted and unique to individuals. In addition, security has different meanings for different groups, including the gendered aspects of securitization. Security discourses typically refer to security from physical harm from an outside group of "attackers." More often than not, these discourses are racialized. Security, in a broader sense, could be linked to food security, housing security, financial security, mental and psychological security, etc. However, security discourses and securitization exude racialized, Islamophobic, and xenophobic rhetoric, which is perpetuated by the European border regime. Existing differences between genders additionally change the ramifications of securitization procedures on women.

⁶⁷ Huysmans, Jef. *The politics of insecurity: Fear, migration and asylum in the EU*. Routledge, 2006.

⁶⁸ Hyndman, Jennifer. "Towards a Feminist Geopolitics." *The Canadian Geographer* 45, no. 2 (2001): 215-216.

⁶⁹ Massaro, Vanessa A., and Jill Williams. "Feminist geopolitics." *Geography Compass* 7, no. 8 (2013): 567-577.

When evaluating European securitization policies and addressing the question, “Security for whom?,” it is clear that Europe’s priority is preserving the “safety” and “security” of European citizens. Refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants are clearly an afterthought in the process at best, or labeled as enemies at worst. The European Union is additionally content to send refugees to Turkey, highlighting further the racial divide between “Europe” and others.

EU-Turkey Statement and Action Plan

The EU uses border externalization as a predominant securitization policy in order to exercise bordering practices outside the external borders of the European Union, exercising power over the body linked to colonialism.⁷⁰ Bilateral agreements between non-EU countries like Turkey, and border patrol projects like Operation Seahorse demonstrate the externalization of the European border.⁷¹ As a result of the influx of migrants into the European Union and their perceived strain on the EU economy and its welfare systems during the ‘migrant crisis’ in 2015, the EU sought ways to curb the number of incoming asylum seekers. The EU and Turkey signed the EU-Turkey Statement and Action Plan in March of 2016, which acted as a statement of cooperation between the two entities. The deal itself indicated that every irregular migrant⁷² to the Greek islands would be deported to Turkey. In exchange for Turkey’s

⁷⁰ Guild, E. (2013). *Security and Migration in the 21st Century*. Oxford: Wiley.

⁷¹ Casas-Cortés, Maribel, and Sebastian Cobarrubias. "A War on Mobility: The Border Empire Strikes Back?." *Ways of Knowing Cities. The Border Empire Strikes Back*. New York (2019): 176-191.

⁷² An irregular migrant is defined as a migrant who arrives in an EU country without official permission or passage. Those without documentation or smuggled in by boat fit into this category, according to EU language.

acceptance of these irregular migrants, EU member-states would accept one fully vetted Syrian refugee on a quid pro quo basis. In addition, the EU would provide €6 million to support Turkey's housing of Syrian refugees in two tranches.⁷³ This deal, though wildly unsuccessful in implementation, demonstrates the EU's overarching management of securitization through border externalization policies. In hiring Turkey to vet migrants for the EU, it outsources asylum processes to third-party entities, thereby protecting so-called Fortress Europe from 'dangerous' migrants. The primary policy goal for the European Union in this case is not isolated to reducing the number of immigrants entering the EU, but also serves to maintain a "secure" border untainted with undeserving outsiders. European citizens and European media (re)produce feelings of suspicion and perpetuate fear mongering concerning asylum seekers and often question their motives for fleeing. The border system is set up to ensure the security of individuals within the borders of the EU, and prioritizes weeding out liars or those perceived as opportunists who seek a better life. These conceptualizations reinforce the concept of the 'deserving' or 'undeserving' migrant and dictate 'who' is allowed into Europe. European securitization policies are notably xenophobic and racist and target black migrants, particularly from North Africa, and Muslim immigrants from the Middle East and Africa. Securitization policies and discourses in Europe predominantly 'protect' white Europeans. Notably, the war in Ukraine in 2022 triggered one of the largest and swiftest refugee movements since the end of WWII. Europe's response has differed demonstrably to the Ukrainian 'refugee crisis' as opposed to the Syrian one in 2015.

⁷³ "EU-Turkey Statement." *European Council, Council of the European Union*, March 18, 2016. European Union. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>.

Ukraine's neighbors and many countries in the EU responded with an outpouring of support for the Ukrainian people, with governments lifting certain visa restrictions, offering free cell service and public transit, and proposing the simplification of border controls and entry conditions for people fleeing Ukraine - a markedly different response to the 2015 'refugee crisis.'⁷⁴

Fotaki highlights this discrepancy, claiming "disregard for humanitarian principles is predicated on radical inequality between lives that are worth living and protecting, and unworthy deaths that are unseen and unmarked by grieving."⁷⁵ Holmes, however, goes one step further, noting that representations of refugees in Europe "demarcate the "deserving" refugee from the "undeserving" migrant and play into fear of cultural, religious, and ethnic difference in the midst of increasing anxiety and precarity for many in Europe."⁷⁶ Agier suggests that refugee camps and border management are part of the process of "managing the undesirables."⁷⁷

The EU presents itself as a normative power, which shapes international relations by promoting peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law, and human rights, social solidarity; anti-discrimination; sustainable development; and good governance.⁷⁸ At a cursory glance and based on the EU's external relations, the EU presents itself as a

⁷⁴ Global Detention Project. "The Ukraine Crisis Double Standards: Has Europe's Response to Refugees Changed?" Global Detention Project, March 2, 2022.

⁷⁵ Fotaki, Marianna. "A crisis of humanitarianism: Refugees at the gates of Europe." *International journal of health policy and management* 8, no. 6 (2019): 321.

⁷⁶ Holmes, Seth M., and Heide Castañeda. "Representing the "European refugee crisis" in Germany and beyond: Deservingness and difference, life and death." *American Ethnologist* 43, no. 1 (2016): 12-24.

⁷⁷ Agier, Michel. *Managing the undesirables*. Polity, 2011.

⁷⁸ Manners, Ian. "Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?." *JCMS: Journal of common market studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 240.

paragon of human rights; however, upon further evaluation critiques are obvious, which crack the image of the EU as a normative power. Literature on colonialism deconstructs this narrative, demonstrating that the EU's roots in colonialism and its migration policies directly contradict its autobiographical presentation. Rather, we observe that the EU fails to fulfill this role both internally and externally. From rule of law violations in EU member states like Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia, to discrimination in France, the EU has faced significant critiques to its own observance of normative goals and beliefs. In addition, the EU's external policies are unaligned with the values they publicize; notably, the EU-Turkey Statement directly contrasts the EU's stated goals and objectives. In addition to the EU-Turkey Statement, the European Union has additional discriminatory border regulation policies that contribute to its ineffectiveness in handling migrant matters, such as Operation Seahorse and the Dublin Convention.

Dublin Regulation

The Dublin Convention, more recently replaced by the Dublin II and III Regulations, established the modern criteria for determining member-state responsibilities in asylum applications from non-EU nationals. Under the guise of “quick access to asylum procedures,”⁷⁹ the Dublin Regulation establishes which member-state is obligated to process asylum claims made by immigrants arriving in the EU. The member-state in which an asylum seeker first enters the EU is routinely responsible for registering asylum applications. This arrangement puts significant strain on countries the EU labels as ‘hot spots,’ or areas of high immigration. Italy and Greece, in particular,

⁷⁹ European Commission. “Country Responsible for Asylum Application (Dublin Regulation).” European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs. Accessed March 30, 2022.

receive more asylum applications proportional to country size than most other EU member states due to their proximity to areas of conflict and accessibility.⁸⁰ It is more practical for an asylum seeker to first enter the EU through Greece or Italy via the Mediterranean than it is for one to first enter Sweden due to their respective physical geographies.

The Dublin Regulation effectively paralyzes asylum seekers by restricting their ability to move throughout the EU for asylum. In essence, this Regulation facilitates the unjust EU border regime, which inhibits human mobility for outsiders, while still allowing EU “insiders” free movement. In establishing these restrictions on movement within the EU, the border regime not only incapacitates migrants collectively, but also puts women at further risk of discrimination and violence in spaces of high migration, especially when they are forced into unstable conditions, like those in refugee camps. Because countries of first entry are responsible for the asylum process for individual immigrants, those with high proportional arrivals have had difficulties keeping up with demand for resources. Greece, for example, restricts migrants to the Aegean islands with little to no access to basic necessities or safety, putting women at serious risk of violence, health issues, and discrimination. These restrictions enable further damage to vulnerable populations beyond the persecution or injustice they face in their country of origin by creating a space of injustice within the ‘borders’ of the European Union. By restricting migrant movement within the Schengen area, the EU exacerbates the trauma done to migrants and allows for the mistreatment of women in unregulated border spaces. As I

⁸⁰ Krithari, Elivira. “Mapping the Migrant Camps in Europe.” Translated by L. Buhain and VoxEurop. European Data Journalism Network, April 29, 2021.

will discuss later in the paper, spaces of injustice, like Moria camp in Greece, are cesspools of unsanitary living conditions, violence, and discrimination, with women weathering egregious abuses.⁸¹

Of particular note, Article 26 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees reads, “Each Contracting State shall accord to refugees lawfully in its territory the right to choose their place of residence to move freely within its territory, subject to any regulations applicable to aliens generally in the same circumstances.”⁸² Refugee camps, as institutions, directly violate this provision; inhabitants in Moria camp, in particular, are unable to choose their place of residence, as Moria is the reception and identification center (RIC). All migrants arriving to Lesbos are required to go to Moria for registration and identification; once they have completed this process, they are released to find accommodation. Residents in Moria camp and Moria 2.0 have significant regulations on the times and places in which they can move between Lesbos and mainland Greece. Additionally, the Dublin Regulation (II and III) limit the free movement of refugees who arrive in Greece to the original member state of arrival (Greece). Citizens and other ‘official’ residents are able to move freely within a much larger territory - the entire Schengen area, demonstrating the fundamental perception and application of the difference between those who ‘belong’ and those who do not.

⁸¹ “The Dublin Regulation.” UNHCR. European Council on Refugees and Exiles. Accessed March 31, 2022.

⁸² United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. “Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.” *UNHCR*, 27.

Rise of the Far-Right and ‘Othering’

There has been a political shift in recent years concerning European Party Politics: the rise of the far-right, which includes both the radical and the extreme right. The far-right, up until recently, has been a diminutive pseudo-party-family in Europe in what Cas Mudde considered to be ‘fringe politics.’ He asserts that the far-right is now mainstream.⁸³ Supporting this assertion, many countries in Europe⁸⁴ now observe far-right parties in positions of power, holding seats in government with some joining governing coalitions.⁸⁵ Examples of far-right parties include: Lega Nord (LN) in Italy, Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, Vox in Spain, Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) in Austria, Rassemblement National in France (Formerly known as Front National), Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland, Fidesz in Hungary, Swedish Democrats,⁸⁶ and Greek Solution, a far-right party that cropped up after Golden Dawn was banned in 2020 with the imprisonment of many of its neo-nazi leaders following its rise to the third-largest political party in Greece.⁸⁷ Though not all far-right parties agree on every issue, common themes permeate their platforms. Standard political stances of far-right parties include nativist ideologies, authoritarianism, extreme nationalism,⁸⁸

⁸³ Mudde, Cas. *The far right today*. John Wiley & Sons, 2019.

⁸⁴ It should be noted that the rise of the far-right is not exclusive to Europe and can be observed globally.

⁸⁵ “Europe and Right-Wing Nationalism: A Country-by-Country Guide.” BBC News. BBC, November 13, 2019.

⁸⁶ Lazaridis, Gabriella, Giovanna Campani, and Annie Benveniste. *The rise of the far right in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2016.

⁸⁷ Samaras, Georgios. “The End of Golden Dawn: Has Greece Shown Us How to Deal with Neo-Nazis?” *The Conversation*, January 9, 2021.

⁸⁸ Halikiopoulou, Daphne, and Tim Vlandas. “What is new and what is nationalist about Europe’s new nationalism? Explaining the rise of the far right in Europe.” *Nations and nationalism* 25, no. 2 (2019): 409-434.

white supremacy, xenophobia, and populism.⁸⁹ Exclusive to Europe, many far-right parties denounce the European Union and its policies with heavy skepticism.⁹⁰

The far-right primarily concerns itself and its citizens with both national and European immigration policies. In particular, the debate on Islam and Muslim immigrants permeates political discourse. Yilmaz proposed in 2012 that far-right parties have gained political influence as a result of a dynamic shift in the 1980's. Far-right parties presented immigration as a cultural threat to European nations, illustrating their roots in traditionalism by "establish[ing] Muslim immigrants as an incompatible ontological category predicated on [common European] culture."⁹¹ Critical discourse analysis reveals that far-right parties use persuasive rhetoric in order to 'other' immigrant populations. In essence, far-right parties, and even mainstream media, portray immigrants as inherently different and undeserving of what Europeans consider their progressive and superior culture.⁹²

Modern alt-right parties characterize Muslim immigrants as terrorists in relation to national security, but also as jihadist enthusiasts eager to eradicate European culture and replace it with Islam, framing an additional argument of cultural attacks in addition to human security. European far-right parties and mainstream media 'other' Muslim

⁸⁹ Mudde, Cas. *The far right today*. John Wiley & Sons, 2019.

⁹⁰ Szöcsik, Edina, and Alina Polyakova. "Euroscepticism and the electoral success of the far right: the role of the strategic interaction between center and far right." *European political science* 18, no. 3 (2019): 400-420.

⁹¹ Yilmaz, Ferruh. "Right-wing hegemony and immigration: How the populist far-right achieved hegemony through the immigration debate in Europe." *Current sociology* 60, no. 3 (2012): 368.

⁹² Jensen, Sune Qvotrup. "Othering, identity formation and agency." *Qualitative studies* 2, no. 2 (2011): 63-78.

immigrant women in particular by advertising them in veiling accompanied by messages of fear and danger. European governments and media contend that veiling is a threat to national and European security, and it is banned in a handful of European nations, either nationally or locally.⁹³

Far-right parties have made anti-immigration a key-issue in domestic politics. Dancygier demonstrates that the mainstreaming of far- and radical-right parties could have detrimental effects on gender equality in national contexts because these parties are typically composed of male voters who emphasize traditional family values, which decry recent advancements made towards gender equity.⁹⁴ Dancygier describes another “Progressive’s Dilemma”, or the “backlash to the backlash”, as cultural opposition to open borders, which provokes simultaneous regression in gender equality due to the rise and subsequent mainstreaming of anti-immigrant parties.⁹⁵ During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, Greece, in particular, saw a rise in femicides and regression of gender equality across the board. Migrant women were targeted by Greek politicians in mainstream media. For example, MP Konstantinos Bogdanos, an independent, far-right MP, led an attack against gender studies in academia in addition to depicting Muslim women’s presence in Greece as unacceptable for “the dominant culture of our country as well as our legal culture,” citing that female Islamic garments

⁹³ The Economic Times. “Switzerland Latest European Country to Ban Islamic Full-Face Veils.” The Economic Times, March 8, 2021.

⁹⁴ Dancygier, Rafaela. “Another Progressive’s Dilemma: Immigration, the Radical Right & Threats to Gender Equality.” *Dædalus* 149, no. 1 (2020): 56-71.

⁹⁵ Dancygier, Rafaela. “Another Progressive’s Dilemma: Immigration”, (2020): 56-71.

are a statement against women's rights and free will.⁹⁶ In a survey, 61.3% of the Greek population thought that Islam threatened the rights of women in the West.⁹⁷ Asylum seekers and refugees in Greece, particularly in Moria camp, become an embodied threat, which both threatens the rights of Greek women, but also national security.

⁹⁶ Vasilaki, Rosa, and George Souvlis. "Banning Golden Dawn Hasn't Stopped Greece's Slide to the Far Right.", 2022.

⁹⁷ Vasilaki, Rosa, and George Souvlis. "Banning Golden Dawn Hasn't Stopped Greece's Slide to the Far Right." Jacobin, February 20, 2022.

Chapter 2

Evolution of Moria

Lesvos is one of the Northeastern Aegean islands, located in the Aegean Sea between mainland Greece and Turkey, which both have sovereignty over a few of the islands. The Greek Northeastern Aegean islands include Lesvos, Samos, Ikaria, Chios, Lemnos, Agios Efstratios, Psara, Fourni Korseon, Oinousses, Rhodes, Kastellorizo; the Turkish islands include Imbros, Tenedos and the Rabbit or Tavşan Islands. Moria camp, in addition to the more recently established Moria 2.0 camp, is located on Lesvos, which includes other refugee camps like Pikpa, and the permanent Kara Tepe camp, which was set aside for “vulnerable people” according to Greece’s refugee and asylum seeker intake procedures.

Moria camp was established in 2013 on Lesvos island in Greece amongst the remains of an old military camp and was originally designed to hold 1,200 residents. The camp was fenced in by an official border - a cement wall with razor wire lining the top;⁹⁸ the space remained monitored but offered free movement. In 2015, the capacity of the camp increased to 3,200 due to the addition of stacking containers. It should be noted that attempts at expansion horizontally were stifled in part due to the protection of neighboring olive groves, but also growing fear that Lesvos would become ‘overrun with

⁹⁸ Donadio, Rachel. “Welcome to Europe. Now Go Home.’.” The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, November 15, 2019.

refugees', leading to the vertical establishment of additional residences during this stage.⁹⁹ Moria camp was constructed to hold approximately 3,000 residents, but has seen over 20,000 residents simultaneously.¹⁰⁰ The island is just 6 miles away from Turkey at the Aegean Sea's narrowest point, prompting action by both the European Union and Turkey to address movement to and from Lesbos and other Northern Aegean islands, especially in the EU-Turkey Statement.¹⁰¹

The Greek Asylum service additionally enshrined a new law which constricted arrivals to the islands with strict limitations on movement until asylum interviews were completed in 2019. However, long wait times for interviews led to a severe backlog and buildup of residents in the camp. The International Protection Act (IPA), adopted on January 1, 2020, further reduced the rights and protections for asylum seekers; however, it attempted to accelerate asylum application processing.¹⁰² The IPA attempted to process new applications within 28 days of arrival, including appeals, a significant cut to average processing times.¹⁰³ However, the adoption of the streamlined process resulted in even longer wait times for older applicants, which resulted in heightened frustration and increased tension in the camp.¹⁰⁴ The rapidly evolving

⁹⁹ Psaropoulos, John. "A Brief History of Moria." *The Critic*, December 29, 2020.

¹⁰⁰ Krithari, Elivira. "Mapping the Migrant Camps in Europe." 2021.

¹⁰¹ Donadio, Rachel. "'Welcome to Europe. Now Go Home.'." 2019.

¹⁰² Panayotatos, Daphne. "Blocked at Every Pass: How Greece's Policy of Exclusion Harms Asylum Seekers and Refugees." *Issue Brief, Relief International* (24 November 2020).

¹⁰³ Kafkoutou, Natalia-Rafaella, and Spyros-Vlad Oikonomou. "Diminished, Derogated, Denied: How the right to asylum in Greece is undermined by the lack of EU responsibility sharing." (2020).

¹⁰⁴ Psaropoulos, John. "A Brief History of Moria." 2020.

situation in the camp in 2020 due to both heightened tension from older asylum applicants and the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, led to dire consequences.

While many reports reference tightening of COVID-19 protection measures following 35 positive COVID-19 tests in the camp¹⁰⁵ as the impetus for a massive fire in Moria camp in September of 2020, others have also cited rising frustration from older asylum applicants due to the new IPA system as contributing to relational strains. Many of the camp's food supplies spoiled during the summer of 2020 with little to no recognition from police and security workers in the camp, which incited mini-protests and contributed to growing tensions in the months leading up to a devastating fire on September 8, 2020.¹⁰⁶ Six Afghan boys, who were minors at the time of the incident, were charged with arson. Two were sentenced to 5 years in prison in juvenile court and four were sentenced to ten years in prison as a result of inciting the devastating fire,¹⁰⁷ which displaced at least 12,000 people from their already-temporary homes in the camp.¹⁰⁸ Many have questioned the fairness of their trial.¹⁰⁹ Hagan's preliminary research in Calais camp in France demonstrates *necropolitical opportunism* undertaken by European governments during the COVID-19 crisis which utilizes exceptional legislation and measures to address one crisis, which in turn, can be mobilized against

¹⁰⁵ Michalopoulos, Sarantis. "Covid-19 'Burns' Moria Refugee Camp." www.euractiv.com. EURACTIV, September 9, 2020.

¹⁰⁶ Andersen, Sebastian Skov, and Gabriel Geiger. "Rule of Silence." *New Internationalist*, January 20, 2022.

¹⁰⁷ Al Jazeera. "Greece: Four Afghan Migrants Jailed over Moria Camp Fire." *Al Jazeera*, June 13, 2021.

¹⁰⁸ Kafkoutou, Natalia-Rafaella, and Spyros-Vlad Oikonomou. "Lesbos Bulletin: Update on the EU 'Hotspot' Moria 2.0." *Oxfam, Greek Council for Refugees*, October 21, 2020.

¹⁰⁹ Al Jazeera. "Greece: Four Afghan Migrants Jailed over Moria Camp Fire." *Al Jazeera*, June 13, 2021.

other crises.¹¹⁰ In the case of Moria camp, the COVID-19 pandemic allowed the Greek government- and the EU by default- to capitalize on the public health crises to enshrine anti-immigrant policies which put immigrant women's lives at particular risk.

Following the raging fires, which began on September 8, and continued through September 9, 2020, 8,000 people were moved to the emergency camp, Kara Tepe, one of the other refugee camps on the island of Lesbos. The remaining residents in Moria camp began to occupy another temporary camp constructed on a former military shooting range,¹¹¹ which was dubbed "Moria 2.0."¹¹² The camp had to be swept for unexploded landmines and grenades due to its history as a former shooting range, demonstrating that basic needs and safety of refugees is neglected. Meeting standard living conditions is an afterthought to Greek authorities as well as European border control, those who arguably should be protecting refugees. As of October 7, 2020, just over 7,500 residents were living in Moria 2.0 with little to no access to water or basic sanitation; most residents in Moria 2.0 are families with children. Women accounted for 23% of the population, and children, for 36%.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Hagan, Maria. "I've never seen a female smuggler, but I wish I had": Life among displaced women negotiating the Calais border during the Covid-19 lockdown (Paper presentation) American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, online (April 2021).

¹¹¹ Kafkoutou, Natalia-Rafaella, and Spyros-Vlad Oikonomou. "Lesbos Bulletin: Update on the EU 'Hotspot' Moria 2.0." October 21, 2020.

¹¹² Fallon, Katy. "'Moria 2.0': Refugees Who Escaped Fire Now Living in 'Worse' Conditions." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 7, 2020.

¹¹³ Grillmeier, Franziska (@f_grillmeier). "Quick update on numbers #Lesvos: Right now 6,972 #refugeesgr reside in the temporary #Mavrovouni camp. Majority of population is from #Afghanistan (71%), #DRC (10%) & #Syria (7%). Women account for 23% of population & children for 36% (7 out of 10 are younger than 12yo). 1/2," Twitter, February 26, 2021. https://twitter.com/f_grillmeier/status/1365321871617589250

Sanitary conditions and the need for private space has become increasingly important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Residents in Moria 2.0 have little to no ability to isolate, making threats from COVID-19 increasingly dangerous.¹¹⁴ NGOs like Oxfam and Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) cite the conditions in Moria 2.0 camp as “abysmal,” noting that residents struggle to find adequate shelter, have limited access to running water, and have limited access to healthcare or legal services; in addition, children have no access to education. Most families are living in tents, some of which are less than 20 meters from the sea; lack of foundation and inadequate protection against weather batters camp residents. Due to a lack of running water in the camp, many people bathe in the sea. Children are at heightened risk of drowning in addition to infections from wastewater due to lack of sewage. The new camp additionally lacks adequate toilets and showers, leaving women exposed to increased risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).¹¹⁵

Semin, a 23-year-old economics graduate from a Kabul university, said she cried when she found out she wouldn’t be moving to the mainland. “My mother tries not to eat a lot of food because she doesn’t want to go to the toilet,” she said, and explained that some people were walking to a nearby town to use toilets in cafes instead of using camp toilets.¹¹⁶

In response to the dangerous conditions in ‘Moria 2.0’ following the fire in Moria camp in September of 2020, the EU committed to providing €250 million in funding for new structures on the Aegean islands, including Lesbos, on March 29, 2021, so that

¹¹⁴ Fallon, Katy. “Moria 2.0’: Refugees Who Escaped Fire Now Living in ‘Worse’ Conditions.” 2020.

¹¹⁵ “Conditions in ‘Moria 2.0’ Camp Are Abysmal, Say GCR and Oxfam.” *Oxfam International*, October 21, 2020. Oxfam International.

¹¹⁶ Fallon, Katy. “Moria 2.0’: Refugees Who Escaped Fire Now Living in ‘Worse’ Conditions.” 2020.

residents would not have to reside in unstable housing for another winter.¹¹⁷ The EU's move was met with harsh criticism by both residents of Moria camp, as well as the northern Aegean islands' regional governor, Kostas Moutzouris, who said, "We don't want the money for new camps – we want it for what we suffered all these years but not to build new camps."¹¹⁸

Fear

In a study conducted in 2018, before the COVID-19 pandemic began, by Refugee Rights Europe concerning the situation in Lesvos, countless human and refugee rights were disregarded.¹¹⁹ In the particular study, 17.3% of respondents were women, indicating a lack of representation in both academic and humanitarian studies in the sector; this respondent rate could indicate the potential fear women feel in speaking about their experiences. Among the camp, 50% of total respondents stated that they were traveling alone, whilst 47.12 responded as traveling with family, 2.24% with friends, and 0.64% with both family and friends. Of the women interviewed, a staggering 88.89% were traveling with family, whereas 11.11% were traveling alone. Distressingly, 92.59% of women in Lesvos indicated that they either "do not feel very safe" or "never feel safe," depicting troublesome images of violence and constant fear on the island and in the refugee camp. According to the American Journal of Managed Care, the effects of chronic fear constitute critical health issues including physical,

¹¹⁷ Fallon, Katy. "EU Announces Funding for Five New Refugee Camps on Greek Islands." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, March 29, 2021.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Refugee Rights Europe. "An Island in despair: Documenting the situation for refugees and displaced people in Lesvos, Greece." (2018).

mental, environmental, and spiritual health risks. The potential consequences of chronic fear on overall health include but are not limited to: immune system dysfunction, endocrine system dysfunction, autonomic nervous system alterations, sleep and wake cycle disruption, eating disorders, and alterations in hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis. Emotional consequences of chronic fear include dissociation from self, inability to have loving feelings, learned helplessness, phobia anxiety, mood swings, and obsessive-compulsive thoughts.¹²⁰ In addition, fear affects the ability to learn, which inhibits the refugee right to education as enshrined in the 1951 Geneva Convention, particularly for young girls. The lived experience of women in Moria camp produces incomprehensible fear, indicating the numerous devastating effects of discriminatory bordering on local scales of geopolitical power.¹²¹

Health

In addition to the consequences of chronic fear on women's health, Moria camp appallingly neglects women's health problems, and severely disregards women's sexual and reproductive health. According to a healthcare provider on Greek mainland,

The first day when I [took] a trip to the clinic it was [a] disaster because I don't exaggerate if I told you 100 women [came] with gynecology [infections]... the doctor before me was from [the] military in Greece and he is [a] man... they cannot [tell] him. None of them [came] and [complained] about their problem... I'm a female doctor, the women [came] like ants.¹²²

¹²⁰ Rosenberg, Jaime. "The Effects of Chronic Fear on a Person's Health." *AJMC*, American Journal of Managed Care, 11 Nov. 2017.

¹²¹ Gökarıksel, Banu, and Anna J. Secor. "Affective geopolitics: Anxiety, pain, and ethics in the encounter with Syrian refugees in Turkey." *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 38, no. 7-8 (2020): 1237-1255.

¹²² Hémono, R., Relyea, B., Scott, J. *et al.* "The needs have clearly evolved as time has gone on.": A qualitative study to explore stakeholders' perspectives on the health needs of Syrian refugees in Greece following the 2016 European Union-Turkey agreement. *Confl Health* 12, 24 (2018).

Women's distinct needs in Moria camp are not met, as many women refugees and asylum seekers would need to see a 'female' doctor for sexual and reproductive healthcare, preventing them from seeking care from that which is available.

In addition to SGBV and lack of reproductive and sexual healthcare, women's mental health also suffers in the camps, and a report by the International Rescue Committee released at the end of 2020 demonstrated that containment policies, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, had detrimental effects on refugees' and asylum seekers' mental health; as many as one in three people living in Greek RICs had thoughts of suicide with high rates of anxiety, depression, and PTSD. The Greek government shut down the "vulnerable" shelter, Kara Tepe at the end of 2020, so women and those experiencing mental health issues who would have been classified as vulnerable can no longer access an alternative solution to Moria camp.¹²³

COVID-19 dramatically altered the landscape of Moria camp and left more than 7,000 in the destitute conditions of Moria 2.0 following the fires in September of 2020; many are still concerned about unexploded munitions at Moria 2.0 in addition to potential lead contamination.¹²⁴ Refugees and asylum seekers in Moria camp prior to and following the fires were also at grave risk of contracting COVID-19 due to their inability to quarantine, isolate, or social distance due to cramped and unsanitary living conditions. Lack of access to resources, like the internet, also limited camp residents'

¹²³ Global Policy Review. "The Effects of Greek Migration Policy on Refugee Women." The IWI: International Women's Initiative. The IWI: International Women's Initiative, April 7, 2021.

¹²⁴ Libal, Kathryn, Scott Harding, Marciana Popescu, S. Megan Berthold, and Grace Felten. "Human rights of forced migrants during the Covid-19 pandemic: an opportunity for mobilization and solidarity." *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* 6, no. 2 (2021): 148-160.

ability to gather accurate information about COVID-19.¹²⁵ The size of the camp made social distancing guidelines impossible, especially when lines for food were a daily occurrence. Many people avoided showering in order to avoid long lines as well, which paradoxically inhibited hygiene. Officials restricted movement outside of the camps, and residents were forced to remain in the refugee camp, further limiting their movement and ability to escape the day-to-day uncertainty of Moria - some women purposely walked to town to use the bathroom in cafes because they found it safer. Notably, initial restrictions on Greek citizens were lifted in May of 2020, but restrictions on camp residents were extended multiple times into at least July of 2020, demonstrating Hagan's proposed *necropolitical opportunism*.¹²⁶ Informal schools in the camp also closed, restricting women and children's ability to form communities of support and learning, which has detrimental effects on both mental and physical wellbeing.¹²⁷

Sexual and gender-based violence

At least 28% of women interviewed experienced SGBV upon arrival in Greece, according to a UNHCR report; Moria camp is the most concerning location for SGBV of all Greek refugee camps.¹²⁸ The "jungle", or olive groves surrounding Moria camp are

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Hagan, Maria. "I've never seen a female smuggler, but I wish I had": Life among displaced women negotiating the Calais border during the Covid-19 lockdown (Paper presentation) American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, online (April 2021).

¹²⁷ Libal, Kathryn, et. al. "Human rights of forced migrants during the Covid-19 pandemic: (2021).

¹²⁸ UNHCR. "Refugee Women and Children Face Heightened Risk of Sexual Violence Amid Tensions and Overcrowding at Reception Facilities on Greek Islands," 2018.

also a site where abuse commonly occurs and is feared.¹²⁹ One woman in Lesvos participating in the Refugee Rights study recounted an incident where a male refugee attempted to enter the changing room she was in, which is located right next to the male changing room. The situation made her anxious and she experienced further psychological trauma as it brought back memories of sexual abuse she had experienced in Iran. Women also avoid showering in Moria camp for fear of having to be in the unprotected bathroom. In addition, some women wear diapers because they are afraid to use the bathroom at night; some are even afraid to use the bathroom during the day.¹³⁰

It should be noted that violence is not only perpetrated by police and Greek residents in Lesvos, but also by refugees themselves, increasing danger for migrant women. Such incidents necessitate an evaluation and modification of the living conditions and security of women in refugee camps, and specifically Moria camp. Produced public spaces, such as changing rooms, bathrooms, and living quarters leave women at considerable risk of abuse from fellow refugees, police, and additional workers in camps in addition to surrounding citizens. In fact, 35.2% of displaced women indicated that they experienced violence perpetrated by other refugees and 14.8% of women indicated abuse from citizens in Lesvos.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Da Silva, Chantal, "Families Live in Fear as Children Suffer Sexual Abuse at Greece's Biggest Refugee Camp," *Newsweek*, 2018.

¹³⁰ Pail, Allison. "The Influence of Gender in Refugee Camp Safety: A Case Study of Moria and Kara Tepe in Lesvos, Greece." *Gendered Perspectives on International Development* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1-19.

¹³¹ Refugee Rights Europe. "An Island in despair: Documenting the situation for refugees and displaced people in Lesvos, Greece." (2018).

Even within the family, women and children are at increased risk for violence. An INGO staffer on Lesbos said,

People start drinking a lot, not all of them, but we've seen that and that leads to violence...within the family, towards women and children... Sometimes they are afraid or they don't want everyone to know. They are ashamed. Or we can see the children, one day they are screaming and the next day they are silent and don't talk at all. (INGO staff, Greek islands)¹³²

All refugees and asylum seekers in Moria camp live under precarious and harsh conditions. Some scholars hypothesize that resulting migrant men's trauma results in misdirected anger, and thereby, violence toward migrant women.¹³³ Additional studies have suggested that unrest and increased violence on days when rare provisions are distributed in Moria suggests that lack of secure resources results in increased violence in the camp.¹³⁴ In addition, restrictions on movement and reduced community interaction increased intimate partner violence for many women and girls in Moria and other refugee camps.¹³⁵

Life Goes On

Life, however, does go on in refugee camps, despite struggles within, around, and about them. Greene highlights everyday tactics which constitute agency of women in refugee camps in Greece including "non-mainstream news consumption as a tactic of

¹³² Hémono, R., Relyea, B., Scott, J. *et al.* "The needs have clearly evolved as time has gone on." (2018).

¹³³ Pail, Allison. "The Influence of Gender in Refugee Camp Safety: A Case Study of Moria and Kara Tepe in Lesbos, Greece." *Gendered Perspectives on International Development* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1-19.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Libal, Kathryn, Scott Harding, Marciana Popescu, S. Megan Berthold, and Grace Felten. "Human rights of forced migrants during the Covid-19 pandemic (2021).

self-care; mediated family practices as a tactic of hope; and nature photography as a tactic of creativity.”¹³⁶

One of the shops close to Moria camp contains vegetables for purchase, which residents can use to cook with. While cooking is a luxury, many venture to the local shops to “do” something. Men are often found cutting hair, and anyone with skills works for petty cash as most residents in the camps, awaiting asylum decisions, are unable to work.¹³⁷ Children are often found playing games like tag or marbles, while others hang out near shops on Lesbos, listen to music, or talk with each other. NGOs attempt to provide some semblance of formal education in the camps, though most children are unable to attend appropriate schooling.¹³⁸

Charlotte Schmitz’ “The Women of Moria” depicts women’s lives in Moria before the 2020 fires. Photos show women in their ‘home spaces’, with their laundry, in their beds, and playing with their children, demonstrating these women’s lived experiences in the camp. In addition, she reveals photos of personal care products, like nail polish, mirrors, and makeup that women use, representing some autonomy in deciding on their appearance. Photos also show cooking arrangements some women make, with daily allocations of drinking water, kettles, cooking oil, and few spices, as well as mealtimes with family.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Greene, Alexandra. “Mobiles and ‘making do’: Exploring the affective, digital practices of refugee women waiting in Greece.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 23, no. 5 (2020): 731-748.

¹³⁷ Saleem, Aasim. “Life in and around the Infamous Moria Camp.” *InfoMigrants*. Infomigrants, October 15, 2019.

¹³⁸ Rudzik, Hannes. “Living in the Moria Refugee Camp: Life and Education.” *Kiron*, March 20, 2020. <https://kiron.ngo/community/living-in-the-moria-refugee-camp-life-and-education/>.

¹³⁹ Schmitz, Charlotte. “The Women of Moria.” *PhMuseum*, 2019.

Photographer, Anna Pantelia captioned a photo of Moria camp after the September 2020 fires with “Life goes on in #Moria camp.. Children continue to play, mothers continue to cook and men continue to cut their hair...”¹⁴⁰ Day-to-day activities still occur despite the backdrop of tragedy in the case of the fires in Moria, as well as insecurity and precarious living conditions, especially for women, who typically support their families.

¹⁴⁰ Pantelia, Anna (@annapantelia) “Life goes on in #Moria camp.. Children continue to play, mothers continue to cook and men continue to cut their hair. But don't get confused, these are not normal living conditions. In #Europe, in 2019, these families should not live in tents.” *Instagram*. February 4, 2019. Accessed March 31, 2022.

Conclusion

Gender should be a key analytical lens in border and refugee studies as well as in policy processes because women and men experience bordering practices differently. I have focused on women in this thesis, and my research reveals that migrant women's needs are not addressed and that they are rendered vulnerable to further violence and mistreatment due to this neglect. In addition, analyzing refugee camps through the lens of gender enables the identification of the limitations of migration policies and the violence of the EU border regime; therefore, scholars should analytically consider gender in addition to age, ethnicity, marital status, family status, and other identity factors when writing about refugees and asylum seekers.

Over the last decade, Greece has experienced its worst economic downturn during peacetime as a consequence of the Euro Crisis. Greece as an individual country is not necessarily responsible for the entirety of the atrocities within its borders. The EU presents itself as a pillar of progressive society with a focus as a normative power concerning human rights; however, its lack of response both financially and politically to the shameful conditions of migrants in Greece demonstrates precisely the opposite of its stated objectives. The EU should, therefore, drastically increase Greece's financial and practical assistance in order to remedy dangerous situations in its refugee camps, especially on the Aegean islands and particularly Moria 2.0 in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and particularly for women migrants. In addition, already-established refugee

camps should be evaluated and restructured, taking into consideration the unique needs of women, particularly those of privacy and sanitation with regard to toileting and showering. If new refugee camps are established, experts should carefully evaluate the structures of new camps from the perspective of women migrants, especially those traveling alone, and ensure that access to toilets, showers, and private spaces is safe and accessible.

In addition, more trained medical professionals, such as counselors, doctors, nurses, and other staff should be accessible to camp residents. Recruiting those specializing in women's health should be prioritized in order to address the abhorrent reproductive and maternal health standards present at Moria camp, Moria 2.0 camp, and other refugee camps across Europe. In addition, medical and psychological evaluations should be accessible immediately upon arrival for refugees to allow the "most vulnerable" immediate access to improved services in the short-term. In order to improve the deplorable conditions in which migrant women must live and continue with life, the European Union must prioritize funding and support for immigrants, but also (re)construct the xenophobic, racist, and strongly gendered discourses that allow for discriminatory migration policies and lack of funding.

Limitations

It is important when discussing the significance of gender roles in European migration to note the critical discourse surrounding the oppressed immigrant woman. Andreassen asserts that news media's communication regarding minority immigrant women focus on domestic violence and marriage practices. In this sense, the media typically portrays minority women as victims rather than survivors, which perpetuates

the perspective of immigrants as victims of a “patriarchal and static culture,”¹⁴¹ whereas Europeans construct an identity of a progressive and non-patriarchal culture.¹⁴² It should be noted that this thesis is intended to highlight the discrepancies in immigration policies through an intersectional lens of gender roles with a particular focus on women. However, I assert that this position does not assume women as purely victims of the European immigration system, but rather survivors of great systemic injustice. Women fleeing persecution are not passive victims to the European state or their nation of origin, but active survivors of oppression within constructed bordering practices. The conscious decision to flee their home country demonstrates active survivorship decision-making and more research is necessary to evaluate discourse regarding oppressed minorities. This active survivorship provides an affirmative biopolitics- “a politics of life which is contrary to power’s attempts to control, manage, and even exterminate life.”¹⁴³ Women in Lesvos have demonstrated that life goes on in both Moria Camp and Moria 2.0 despite precarious, unsafe, and unsanitary conditions.

This thesis attempts to address reconciling with bordering practices and the agency of women migrants without promoting cultural essentialism. While the thesis classifies women refugees as a broad category through which we can understand the process of bordering for individual migrants. I address the “micro-dimension, meso-

¹⁴¹ Andreassen, Rikke. "The mass media's construction of gender, race, sexuality and nationality: An analysis of the Danish news media's communication about visible minorities from 1971--2004." (2005): 3766-3766.

¹⁴² Describing visible minorities as a homogenous oppressed group of Muslim women maintains the manufactured assumption that native European women are liberated from structures of gender inequality. This is not the case.

¹⁴³ Nabi, Salim. *Invisible Lives as an Emerging Paradigm. COVID-19 and the Refugee Situation in Lesbos, Greece*. Refugee Review, vol. 5, forthcoming.

dimension, and macro-dimension of intersectionality (i.e. the levels of micro-interaction, representation, and social structure) through the lived experience of women in transit, legality of refugee experiences, and social structure of those lived experiences.”¹⁴⁴ The women refugees discussed in this paper represent individuals with agency and a multitude of cultures. ¹⁴⁵

The research conducted in this thesis was performed virtually, and the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited opportunities for fieldwork. In addition to limited sources citing Moria refugee camp during the COVID-19 crisis, many volunteers and NGO - workers have been unwilling or unable to share camp conditions due to Greek authorities’ crackdown on information about the camp. According to multiple sources, many humanitarian workers had to sign non-disclosure agreements, limiting their ability to share information about the camp, both present and past situations. Those workers fear retaliation if they publicly share conditions in Moria camp, limiting available sources. Journalists and NGO- workers have additionally had limited access to Moria camp since May of 2021, upon raising concerns over food supplies¹⁴⁶ and since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which strict lockdown measures were enforced.

Call for Further Research

The nature of gender roles in migration is markedly understudied. While this thesis attempts to address part of the women migrant experience to and within Europe

¹⁴⁴ Bürkner, Hans-Joachim. "Intersectionality: How Gender Studies might Inspire the Analysis of Social Inequality among Migrants." *Population Space and Place* 18, no. 2 (2012): 181-195.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Andersen, Sebastian Skov, and Gabriel Geiger. "Rule of Silence." 2022.

through its bordering practices and violent border regime using Moria Camp and Moria 2.0 in Greece as an example, further research is imperative in deciphering the role and needs of migrant women. Because the EU is a supranational institution made up of individual member states, policy choices made by national governments can become aggregated into EU policy; additional research into the how decisions made by national governments affect EU policy, and how those decisions affect women migrants would be useful. Furthermore, additional research on all gender roles is crucial in understanding bordering practices and the character of discriminatory human mobility. For example, Muslim immigrant men also face particularly strong discrimination based on their race, gender, and religion, and are commonly portrayed as terrorists who are a threat to national and EU security. Sune Qvotrup Jensen presents compelling research regarding the role of gender in European media discourse, which suggests that immigrant men are sexually dangerous, in particular, othering black Muslim immigrants in urban spaces.¹⁴⁷ Further research is needed to dissect the dichotomy between the roles of women and men migrating to Europe and their differing lived experiences. Additionally, this paper focuses on women as a fairly homogenous group; however, it should be noted that the LGBTQIA+ population is greatly disadvantaged within constructed bordering practices in and around Europe.¹⁴⁸ While addressing some of the heightened difficulties that women have faced in transit and bordering spaces due to the COVID-19 pandemic, much more research is necessary to evaluate the effects of the

¹⁴⁷ Qvotrup Jensen, Sune. "Masculinity at the margins—othering, marginality and resistance among young marginalized ethnic minority men." *Norma* 5, no. 1 (2010): 6-26.

¹⁴⁸ Ayoub, P. M., & Bauman, L. (2019). Migration and queer mobilisations: how migration facilitates cross-border LGBTQ activism. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(15), 2758-2778.

COVID-19 crisis on mobility and its gendered implications, with particular regard to both women's health and safety in their respective living spaces. Similarly, climate change will wreak havoc on existing bordering practices and standards with the potential for record numbers of both internally and externally displaced migrants. Additional research will be needed to determine the gendered implications of climate migration globally, with support from local and affected women at the forefront of solutions.

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