



EU BORDER CARE & TRANSITORY LIVES COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOP

(UN)MAKING LIVES AT THE BORDER: PRECARIETY, MOBILITY AND PERMANENCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATION ENCOUNTER

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Sala Belvedere

Villa Schifanoia, Via Boccaccio 121 - Florence

14 -15 DECEMBER 2017

■ INTRODUCTION

This workshop brings together researchers from two different funded research projects on migration in European borderlands. Building on existing scholarship and new findings, we wish to initiate an interdisciplinary dialogue between scholars in the field of anthropology, sociology, and border and migration studies on relatively understudied themes and to highlight the narrative and material continuities between the social, moral and legal dimensions of forced displacement. Focusing on the Mediterranean, the work presented negotiates, in diverse ways, three key concepts - mobility, precarity, and permanence - that best unlock the intricacies of the mobility nexus along these highly mediated international migration routes.



■ PROGRAMME

14 DECEMBER

9.15 - 11.00

Session 1 - Chair: Prof. Andrew Geddes | EUI

Twisting and Turning: Moral Deliberations of Border Workers on the EU's Mediterranean External Border.

Daniela DeBono | Malmö University and EUI

Border workers challenge the dominant notion of the 'humanitarian border' and in so doing, their portrayal as 'cogs in the wheel'. This is significant since institutional actors position themselves along the humanitarian-security axis. Border workers as frontline field personnel working 'on the ground' with incoming migrants give a different rendition of the border system and how it works, due to their strategic location in the system. Their narratives are interesting not only because they shed light on paradoxical elements constitutive of the first reception system, but because they are attempts at rationalising the system and their role within it. Narratives are infused with both ethical concerns and cynicism, and the migrant rendered to 'bare life' serves as a moral compass. This article builds on long-term multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in southern Italy with border workers working for a range of different entities such as the police forces, international organisations, EU agencies, local NGOs, and migrants. By analysing the 'twisting and turning' of the narratives of border workers, the article looks at how they cross cut on issues considered irreconcilable in dominant representations. The article concludes that these fraught narratives point towards the inherent tensions in the border regime constructed on moral foundations which make it difficult to accommodate the 'human'.

Strange Patience: Kinship, Care, and Regeneration in Southern European Borderlands.

Vanessa Grotti | EUI and **Marc Brightman** | EUI, UCL, Bologna University

This paper investigates the migration encounter on Europe's periphery through the lens of kinship, reproduction and regeneration. Based on ethnographic data collected in rescue and hospitality structures in Southern Italy over the past year and on comparative material collected in other European borderlands in the Mediterranean and Overseas France, our analysis will explore symmetrically the making and unmaking of life on the migration trail, with a special focus on birth, youth and disappearance on the move. We are used to thinking of kinship as the foundation of personhood and community, but what happens to these when persons, often still minors themselves, are severed from their home communities, their families and bodies violently split apart and sent across continents? The Central Mediterranean Route criss-crosses Sub-Saharan Africa and converges in Niger and Libya to enter Italy and Europe. It has recently been named as the deadliest international migration route in the world by the International Organization for Migration. The main entry points into Europe are Sicily and Lampedusa, which are the places of initial reception, treatment and detention before transfer to the Italian mainland. Through the ethnography of

reproductive care and of social integration initiatives for refugees and asylum seekers, and looking beyond images of suffering subjects and of neoliberal governance regimes, we examine how kinship and personhood are annihilated and remade in radical circumstances.

11.00 - 11.15

Coffee break

11.15 - 12.45

Session 2 - Chair: Prof. Dimitris Christopoulos | FIDH & Panteion University

Pathways of Care, Formations of Citizenship: The Right to Maternity Care in a European Union Buffer State.

Cynthia Malakasis | EUI

This paper will focus on the interactions, discourses, and practices of state and non-state actors who come into contact in the process of providing maternity care to migrants and refugees in Athens, Greece; this includes NGO, public, and independent practitioners, both medical and administrative. The paper seeks to bring forward some of the key perceptions of these care-providing subjects, in order to understand the citizenship “bundles” (Sassen 2008) that form in response to the set of socio-historical conditions operative in Greece at the present conjuncture; to wit, the advent of refugees since 2015, the neoliberal paradigm of the self-managing subject and the regimes of social welfare but also the resistances it generates, and Greece’s precarious sovereignty in its capacity as an indebted but also buffer state in the European Union.

Distributed Sovereignty: The Management of Forced Displacement in Conditions of Partial Democracy.

Elisabeth Kirtsoglou | Durham University and **Giorgos Tsimouris** | Panteion University

On the basis of original data collected in Greece, we critically review the commonly held belief that the 2015-2016 ‘refugee crisis’ was the result of ‘large’ or ‘unmanageable flows’ of forcibly displaced persons reaching Europe. Failures in refugee reception structures, we claim, emerged as a result of the failure of a wide array of agents to fulfil their political and institutional roles in international protection. War, conflict and poverty-related displacement was negotiated through policy perceptions about ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, and the intensely problematic dichotomy between ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’ that was further reified by the EU-Turkey 2016 agreement. A close examination of high-level strategies of responding to the recent refugee arrivals reveals a motif consistent with dominant neoliberal paradigms of governance. The EU systematically attempted to ‘sub-contract’ the management of arrivals to individual governments and promoted Regional Protection Programmes in third countries. Governments outsourced responsibilities to local and international NGOs that proved less than ready to cover the growing demands for humanitarian assistance. Key national and supranational agencies avoided the responsibility and ownership of a scheme of international protection by largely ‘contracting out’ the obligation to facilitate refugee passage to the third sector, solidarity networks, volunteers and local communities. As a result, an unprecedented ‘crisis’ has been produced, which resulted, in its turn, to the creation of multiple

sites of exception and human rights' violations. A critical analysis of political decisions and indecision, humanitarian anti-politics and refugee narratives, demonstrates an emerging model of citizenship in Europe, which is exclusionist, neo-orientalist and morally incompatible with the -presumably significant and established- tradition of European political values.

12.45 - 13.45 **Lunch** (Villa Schifanoia Canteen)

13.45 - 14.45 **Session 3 - Chair: Nina Sahraoui** | EUI

Visual Representations of Place-Making and Transient Intimacy in Athens. (Roundtable Discussion)

Discussants: **Hala Alhouch, Vanessa Grotti, Cynthia Malakasis, Sandrine Martin**

This discussion brings together two visual artists and two academics, whose joint efforts yielded visual representations of migrant maternity care in Athens. Graphic artist Sandrine Martin produced a comic series, [Expecting](#), based on the ethnographic research of EU Border Care in Athens, on the parallel paths of two fictionalized characters, Sham and Matina - a migrant refugee from Syria and a Greek midwife working for an NGO respectively. The comic draws on Sandrine's own plural perspective, including her particular ties to Greece, her artistic gaze, and her own motherhood experience. Photographer Hala Alhouch is a native of Syria who has spent more than half her life in Greece. She has worked as an interpreter in a downtown Athens independent centre offering maternity care, but also as interpreter and photographer for the EU Border Care ethnographic research in the city. Through a selection of Sandrine and Hala's work, we will engage in a dialogue regarding the ethical, conceptual, and political implications, as well as the process and experience of rendering the findings of an academic project artistically. We will also discuss the two artists' insights into socio-culturally mediated gender hierarchies, relations of care, and Greece as a physical, cultural, and political buffer between refugees and north-western European destinations.

14.45 - 15.00 **Coffee break**

15.00 - 16.45 **Session 4 - Chair: Prof. Maureen Kelley** | Oxford University

Interwoven Spaces of Deterrence and Care at a Militarised Southern European Border.

Nina Sahraoui

Melilla, the Spanish enclave in the North of Africa is, along with Ceuta, the only territorial border of the European Union with the African continent. A frontline space of European and Spanish migration policies, Melilla's economic fate is highly dependent on both local border crossings with the Moroccan region of Nador and international migration. In this limited territory of only 12 square kilometres and 84,000 inhabitants, migration and borders are co-constitutive of the social space and the social fabric of the city. The 'migration industry' employs border guards and police forces but also social workers, translators, and healthcare professionals. Three hundred meters away from the militarized fence, the *Centre for the Temporary Stay of Immigrants* (CETI) hosts undocumented migrants and asylum seekers. Melilla is undoubtedly a space of

deterrence: if the barbed wires installed on several sections of the fence epitomise this materially, the use of Melilla as a 'buffer zone' constitutes a more subtle symptom of this function. This deterrence space is however interwoven with spaces of care: an international NGO provides primary care inside the Centre and sends people to the local hospital in case of emergency. The focus of this paper on maternity care allows uncovering how 'deterrence' and 'care' are intertwined at the discursive, policy and practice levels of migration management in Melilla. The narratives of healthcare professionals reveal how spaces of care and discourses of compassion not only co-exist, but indeed complement the deterrence purposes of the fences. *De facto*, the agents of 'deterrence' and 'care' share similar socio-economic statuses and are at times related by family links. This paper relies on three months of ethnographic fieldwork in Melilla, participant observation in the CETI, as well as semi-structured interviews with NGOs, healthcare professionals and migrant women.

Reproductive Justice and De-Territorialised Births: Mothering Experiences of Local and Migrant Women in Lampedusa, Italy.

Chiara Quagliariello | EHES

This paper focuses on the social, political, cultural and economic aspects of mothering experiences of local and migrant women in Lampedusa, Italy. Firstly, I analyse the characteristics of the medical offer in this European borderland, which is strongly isolated at the geographical level and historically crossed by migratory flows from the African continent. I explore the extent to which the high fragmentation of medical care and the lack of maternity services where women can give birth have an impact on the quality of mothering experiences of both local and migrant populations. Secondly, I underline how the important gap that local women experience between the discourse of belonging to their own territory and the one of medical risks contributes to a perception of unequal reproductive rights compared to the rest of the Italian population, who can benefit from a better healthcare system at a lower cost. Finally, I argue that the modern separation between an 'us' (islanders) and 'them' (migrants), is based on the perceived privilege of migrant women to have free access to medical care. Such a discourse reveals social tensions which are part of the island's internal structural problems, such as: local precarity and the difficulties in facing economic costs for medical care in Sicily, a limited choice on where it is possible to give birth, and the questioning of local identity because of de-territorialised births.

16.45 - 17.15

Final discussion

19.30

Dinner (upon invitation only)

15 DECEMBER

9.30 - 11.00

Session 5 - Chair: Dr. Marc Brightman | EUI, UCL, Bologna University
Making Politics, Making Home: Refugee Politicisation in Piraeus, Greece.

Maria Kenti Kranidioti | Durham University

The present paper examines the different forms of refugee politicisation in Piraeus in 2016. As a result of the closure of European borders, nearly seven thousand refugees were transported from the Aegean islands to Piraeus where they remained for approximately two months before they were eventually transferred in the organised camp of Scaramangas. Following Cabot's (2014) analysis and on the basis of original ethnographic evidence I wish to argue that refugees consciously resisted the positionality of the passive recipient of humanitarian care and sought to exercise some agency and control over their life situations. The paper documents prominent and notable political instances of politicisation such as the organisation of a united front of refugees from different nationalities, demonstrations, the attempt to "occupy" Syntagma square and forceful confrontations with international humanitarian care representatives. Alongside those notable expressions of campzanship (Sigona 2015) however, one could observe what Auyero (2000) called a "micro-politic of resistance" that took the form of daily, conscious attempts to "reverse hospitality" (Rozakou 2010). The refugees were engaged constantly in "home-making" through inviting and feeding volunteers (and the anthropologist) in their tents, through cooking simple meals, and through exchanging courteous visits which involved small "gifts" presented by the visitor to the host. By examining the array and interplay of different practices, this paper attempts to provide a nuanced and complex picture of refugee efforts to "preserve their dignity" and to resist fixing themselves in passive positionalities and hierarchies of dependence.

Unpacking Moments of Affective Disobedience: From the Abstraction of the Tragic, to the Materiality of the Performance.

Marios Chatziprokopiou | Aberystwyth University

In recent years, the figure of the 'displaced Other' has occupied an increasingly central role on European and Greek stages. Yet, as this paper shows, theatrical representations of displaced people often reproduce them as ahistorical, tragic victims, deprived of political rights and cultural past. Drawing on fieldwork on two recent performances in Athens, Greece, this paper argues that theatre as an institutional apparatus risks reproducing the structures of representation it ostensibly seeks to subvert or displace: in spite of itself, theatre often ends up becoming a technology that reproduces dominant representations of otherness. At the same time, this paper unpacks moments of affective disobedience, in which such representations are challenged, if not overcome. Through participant observation of the rehearsal process and semi-structured interviews with the participants, I look at instances in which the performers themselves seem not to conform to the political/aesthetic norms imposed on them, and thus complicate the essentialized figure of the tragic Other. They appear as unique historical, cultural, and creative subjects, who do not simply provide staged accounts of their realities, but often make highly accomplished artistic proposals. By doing so, I contend, they do not simply bring material from 'their own culture' into the cultural context in which they currently operate; rather, they also take up part of what it is often regarded as 'local heritage': they re-appropriate and reinvent cultural forms related to the host country, challenging dominant conceptions of cultural continuity and national belonging.

11.00 - 11.15	Coffee break
11.15 - 12.30	Publication Meeting
12.30	Lunch and goodbye (Villa Schifanoia Canteen)

■ PARTICIPANTS

Hala Alhouch	Independent Interpreter and Photographer
Danielle Borges	EUI
Marc Brightman	EUI, UCL, Bologna University
Marios Chatziprokopiou	Aberystwyth University
Dimitris Christopoulos	FIDH & Panteion University
Daniela DeBono	Malmö University and EUI
Andrew Geddes	EUI
Vanessa Grotti	EUI
Maureen Kelley	Oxford University
Elisabeth Kirtsoglou	Durham University
Maria Kenti Kranidioti	Durham University
Cynthia Malakasis	EUI
Sandrine Martin	Graphic Artist
Chiara Quagliariello	EHESS
Nina Sahraoui	EUI
Giorgos Tsimouris	Panteion University