



Capstone:

Chaos on Chios: How the EU-Turkey Deal Strands Refugees on Greek Islands in a European Crisis

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## **Abstract**

In October 2015, when increasing numbers of asylum seekers caused European states to take unilateral measures that weakened and fragmented the Union, the refugee crisis grew to a magnitude the continent had not seen since World War II. In order to restore public order and save the crumbling European project, the European Union struck a deal with Turkey to close the tap through which refugees poured into European territory. The so-called EU-Turkey Deal (ETD) took effect on March 20, 2016 and marks the turning point in the refugees' situation all across the continent. Although the main refugee routes have been sealed, people continue to arrive from Turkey on Greek islands. While people are processed according to the deal, they are held on these islands in conditions that are far below the humanitarian standards one would expect on European territory as. This interdisciplinary piece of research is the first to examine the ETD's consequences for refugees and volunteers on Greek islands. It is based on fieldwork conducted among refugees and independent volunteers on the Greek island Chios during the summer of 2016 and draws particularly on theories in the fields of international relations and anthropology. The analysis starts with the examination of immediate challenges refugees and volunteers encounter on the island, which are primarily bad living conditions and the state of waiting. It traces these challenges back to the ETD and puts its conclusion into historic, political, and theoretical perspective. It clarifies Chios' refugees' relationship to Europe and assigns primary responsibility for providing assistance to the refugees on Chios to the European Union. It concludes that the refugees' humanitarian situation on Chios and the overall consequences of the EU-Turkey Deal are a manifestation of

a European crisis and require that the European Union take responsibility for the refugees it continues to strand on Greek islands.

*Keywords:* Refugee Crisis, EU-Turkey Deal, Greece, Europe, Responsibility

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This thesis is devoted to all the people who are still on their way to safety. I wish, that you will reach your destinations soon and can start a life again. This thesis is a message from Chios and is addressed to Europe, its citizens and governments. I hope that it will reach a postbox somewhere and will be read and taken seriously by someone - as my Syrian friends would add at this point: *insha'Allah*.

## 1. Introduction: Chaos on Chios

*We escaped from war, to get in[to] another war.*

– Omar, Syrian refugee on Chios

Omar landed on the shore of the Greek island Chios in July 2016. He escaped the fighting in Syria, but why, he asks, has he landed into another war, despite his being on European ground? He is one of thousands who involuntarily find themselves in the centre of a war fought in the European Parliament, among member states' national parties, and on local streets where pro-refugee and anti-immigration protests clash. The disagreement about how to handle refugee flows entering European Union (EU) territory, particularly since the numbers increased rapidly to reach a climax in 2015, has led to what media and politicians came to refer to as *refugee crisis*.

When German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced her open border policy regarding Syrian refugees, she became celebrated as the Syrians' super hero "Mama Merkel" and at the same time European leaders denounced her for betraying the EU. After the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) tweeted on Aug. 25, 2015 that the Dublin agreement would be suspended for Syrian refugees (BAMF, 2015), other member states could have followed suit and unleashed a wave of European solidarity, cooperation, and affirmation of the core values of the European project. Instead, this move fuelled expansion of nationalistic and anti-immigration groups and widened the split between European countries. However, in the midst of the rising uproar and the continuing

stream of refugees toward Western Europe, suddenly a rushed ray of hope to “restore public order” (General Secretariat of the Council, 2016) enlightened the political scene: On March 20, 2016, the so-called EU-Turkey Deal (ETD) took effect and changed everything. Suddenly, the crisis seemed solved as the refugees’ main route through Europe was closed, they were not arriving in visible masses at Munich’s central station anymore, and Europe could breath a sigh of relief.

Regardless of the deal, the Syrian war continued, refugee boats kept crossing the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Europe, and the conditions in Greek camps were degrading. In mid December 2016, officially 62,700 people were stuck in Greece (UNHCR, 2016a) and the ones fed up with waiting continued to attempt their way northwards with the aid of smugglers. The ETD did not solve the refugee crisis, but just put it on hold as new arrivals accumulate on Greek islands located close to Turkey. While it seems like European politics has turned a blind eye to the ongoing problem, thousands are living in unacceptable conditions that leave both refugees and volunteers wondering if this island actually belongs to Europe.

This research is the first to analyse the refugees’ and volunteers’ situation on Greek islands after the ETD took effect. It is based on fieldwork conducted on Chios and highlights the ETD’s role as it marks the turning point in the refugees’ situation and the EU’s direct responsibility for their circumstances. It particularly draws on theory from international relations and anthropology, which put these findings into context. Through an interdisciplinary lens, I read the field research data, political constructs, and social relations with respect to each other.

The second chapter provides a literature review, locating refugees within the context of academic literature, history and definitions. It first elaborates on the concepts of anthropology and international relations that will be used for the analysis. Then, it distinguishes refugees from other migrants, follows major advancements in the development of the international refugee regime, and finally discusses various definitions of the term *refugee*. Chapter 3 discloses the methodology implemented during the field research on Chios conducted among refugees and independent volunteers. After describing the research site, it elaborates on the three pillars that the research is based upon: 1) participant observation as volunteer, 2) hanging out with refugees, and 3) formal interviews. Chapter 4 focuses on refugees' and volunteers' experiences on Chios. It first lists the six themes extracted from the interviews and then describes the shortcomings of refugees' living conditions. After that, it devotes attention to the refugee's state of waiting, which is analysed through theory on liminal spaces by the two anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. Additionally, it informs about challenges independent volunteers encountered in their daily routines. The fifth chapter explores how the ETD functioned as response to a crisis. After describing the events leading up to the height of the refugee influx and actors' response to the escalating situation, I elaborate on the ETD itself. In this context, the notion of good and bad people as well as genuine and false refugees is explored to shine light on refugees' and volunteers' perceptions regarding closed borders. Then, Europe's response to increasing numbers of refugees is discussed through the two key international relations theories, realism and liberalism. Afterwards, a look at anthropologist Mary Douglas provides a different take on the same issue as the application of her thought shows how events served to re-

establish order. Chapter 6 continues analysis and discussion as it investigates Europe's role on Chios with special focus on responsibility. The first part elaborates on refugees' and volunteers' relationship to Europe, and the second part analyses which actors are currently present on Chios and if any of them should assume primary responsibility for providing assistance. Chapter 6 finds that by implementing the ETD, the EU is directly responsible for stranding refugees on Greek islands like Chios and deprives them of the possibility to provide for themselves. Therefore, the EU as collective of its member states has to assume primary responsibility to address the deal's consequences. This needs to far exceed current provisions in order to ensure living standards that are adequate to European standards and values.

This thesis concludes that the refugees' humanitarian situation on Chios and the overall consequences of the EU-Turkey Deal are a manifestation of a European crisis and require that the EU take responsibility for the refugees it continues to strand on Greek islands.

## **2. Literature Review: Refugees Located within the Context of Literature, History and Definitions**

Drawing from academic literature, this chapter focuses on providing theoretical and historical background information, as well as definitions necessary for analysis and discussion. It does so by covering five parts: 1) I outline the disciplines that influence the analysis and introduce concepts of anthropology and international relations. 2) I identify the subgroups of migrants that are of interest. 3) I give a historic overview of the contemporary international refugee regime. 4) It follows a discussion of different definitions of the term *refugee*. 5) I locate the research on a specific point of the refugees' journey. This chapter provides the basis for the analysis and discussion of refugees' situation on Greek islands, the EU-Turkey Deal (ETD), and Europe's role in the circumstances.

### **2.1. Relevant Concepts from Anthropology and International Relations**

One approach to organizing the vast field of migration studies is by discipline. However, no single academic discipline is sufficient to grasp the experience and dynamics of migration (Black, 2001; Castles, 2003). In order to explain causes and dynamics of forced migration, one needs to take history, geography, politics, economics and anthropology into consideration. To study policies and institutions affecting migration requires a political science, international relations and law approach; social policy studies join these in examining settlement and community relations of migrants. In order to analyse experiences and the role of identity theory from the fields of psychology, cultural studies and anthropology is necessary.

### **2.1.1. Anthropological Concepts of van Gennep, Turner, and Douglas**

This is an interdisciplinary piece of research with special focus on international relations and anthropology. Conducting analysis through their lenses, enables the thesis to regard political structures, as well as the significance of socio-cultural processes and human experience on the individual level. Anthropology is a discipline with a sedentary bias (Malkki, 1995) as it is traditionally focussed on territorialized, relatively unchanging, rural, indigenous communities, therefore on rooting rather than moving (Clifford, 1988). Anthropologists first left this stance when they started to research rural-urban migration (Brettel, 2000). In this context, the discipline's primary interest is the human dimension of the global process of migration. Thus, it is about the lived experience of being a migrant and socio-cultural processes connected to migration flows, rather than their broad scope in political terms. Although the primary focus is therefore on the migrants' emic perspective, anthropologists do accept the premise that migrants shape and are shaped by political, economic, social and cultural contexts (Brettel, 2000).

The experience of the immigrant in the receiving society features especially high in popularity among anthropologists' migration research (Lanz, 2013), covering fields such as culture change, social organization, community building, adaptations of ethnic or national identities, and impact on societies (Brettel, 2000). Other prevalent topics are dynamics of transnational networks, like diasporas, camp experiences, repatriation, and institutions dealing with refugees (Brettel, 2000; Colson, 2003). For this research, the primary strength of anthropology lies in its focus on the individual perspective explored through ethnographic work, which

builds the body of anthropological migration research and the basis for studies in multiple disciplines (Brettel, 2000; Colson, 2003).

The analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 draws from the thought of three anthropologists, Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner and Mary Douglas, who are all writers of classic works in their discipline. Subsequently, I will introduce their concepts in order to refer back to them in the following chapters. All three developed their theories with reference to rituals. Nevertheless, they provide an insightful view on the human and social dimension of dynamics relating to refugees stranded on Chios, which complements the international relations approach.

Arnold van Gennep wrote in his book *The Rites of Passage* (1960) that such rituals accompany every change of place, state and social position. In the second chapter, he focuses on territorial passage from one region to another. He argues that traditionally, the frontiers of a territory occupied by a tribe were either defined by natural boundaries like a sacred tree, rock or river, or marked by an object like a portal or milestone. These marks at specific points of passage symbolized prohibition of crossing into a territory and rendered transgression a magico-religious act, which could be sanctioned by spiritual powers. Van Gennep makes a connection of such practices to modern borders between countries, where one nation's territory touches another, which historically was not the case. Instead, a band of neutral ground surrounded every country, which was used as space for trade and battles. Usually, such neutral ground was comprised of marshes, deserts or old forests. A person crossing from one territory into the other had full rights to travel and hunt in these corridors and found himself "physically and



magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds” (van Gennep, 1960, p.18). Once a traveller passed such neutral territory, he left one world behind and entered a new one. Symbolically, the transition from one to another world might have taken place by passing a portal or milestone. In Chapter 4, I will examine how the refugees’ journey from Syria to Western Europe shows parallels to van Gennep’s description of territorial passage.

Turner (1994) based his classic essay “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage” on van Gennep’s book. He defines rites of passage as transition between states. States are relatively fixed or stable conditions, which also include legal status. Turner (1994, p. 5) writes that “during the intervening liminal period, a state of the ritual subject (the "passenger") is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state”. These passengers are then defined by three major characteristics:

- 1) They are structurally “invisible”, that is, they are no longer and not yet classified. This can go as far that their name is taken from them and replaced with a generic term. This issue will be addressed in Chapter 4, which examines how volunteers emphasize refugees’ stories that individualize the refugee.
- 2) They have nothing; neither a status, nor rights to property or any way to distinguish themselves from others in the same transitional state. This renders them all the same, reducing them to a uniform condition (see Chapter 4).
- 3) The third characteristic arises from their condition as ambiguous, paradox and a confusion of all customary categories. As they are between recognized and fixed points of structural categories, passengers are considered polluting. This will be applied to

refugees in Chapter 5 in connection to Mary Douglas' thought on how people consider anything in such a state unclean.

Before examining Douglas' thought more thoroughly, I want to address the idea of naked or bare life, which closely relates to Turner's second characteristic of people in liminal spaces. When Malkki (1992) identifies refugees to fit Turner's definition of liminal personae, she describes them as undifferentiated, naked people. The notion of "bare life" (Agamben, 1998), "naked life" (Arendt, 1958), "bare citizens" (Appadurai, 2013), or "bare humanity" (Malkki, 1996) arise likewise in literature on prisoners in Guantanamo Bay (Agamben), the Nazis' concentration camps (Arendt), the urban poor (Appadurai), and refugees (Malkki). All named groups have in common that they are subjected to living conditions that deprive them of means to sustain their own lives, calling for intervention as they are reliant on assistance; a notion that subsequent relations will relate back to. They are all floating in spaces that are considered exceptional circumstances, that is, that are liminal. Chapter 4 will come back to this notion of naked or bare existence.

Mary Douglas is especially famous for her book *Purity and Danger* (1966), which became a classic in anthropology. At the basis of her argument lies the assumption that humans categorize anything they encounter in order to make sense of the world around them. Such systems provide the skeleton of individuals' or cultures' basic assumptions and enable people to navigate through life. According to Douglas, any system of classification and ordered relations automatically gives rise to anomalies that put that system into danger. She

defines such anomalies as “matter out of place” (p. 44). Malkki (1992) applies Douglas’ theory to refugees and argues that our social and political world is based on sedentarist assumptions, as seen for example in the separation of the world into national territories. Refugees fall out of the “national order of things” (Malkki, 1995) as they have left their national territory and do not have a legitimate space in another one (yet). Thus, they pose a symbolic danger as they represent matter out of place. Therefore, because the very nature of displacement is defined as pathological condition, topics related to refugees are inherently politically sensitive (Malkki, 1992).

Malkki (1992) writes that these dynamics trigger three processes that are visible in the response to refugees, namely generalization, problematization, and externalization. While Turner’s characterization of liminal personae reflects the first one, the latter two fit Douglas’ (1966) five strategies to restore order: 1) One can find interpretations of an event that make it fit into a category. 2) Anomalies can be avoided and ignored. 3) They can be labelled dangerous. 4) The anomaly can be physically controlled, that is mostly, eliminated. 5) They can be used to call attention to other levels of existence. I consider these strategies useful to shine light on the reactions to the refugee crisis, which are examined in Chapter 5, because it gives a revealing insight into the human and social dimension of political dynamics such as the conclusion of the ETD.

## **2.1.2. International Relations' Realism, Liberalism and Social Constructivism**

The discipline of international relations looks at large-scale, global patterns often adapting the perspective of administrators (Malkki, 1995). The discipline originally focused on the study of war and peace, state and military security. This scope expanded to issues in global economy, environment, international trade and human rights. According to Betts and Loescher (2011), there is relatively little research done on forced migration in international relations. Existing works touch on issues of international cooperation and non-state actors, globalization and North-South relations, human rights, and security. The discipline of international relations emphasizes top down analysis to understand global structures impacting states' and other international actors' behaviour. Therefore, it constructs forced migration as an international political phenomenon (Betts and Loescher, 2011; Malkki, 1995). This thesis profits from international relations theory as it places the issues at hand within a political context and thus adds a vital perspective to the analysis.

I apply three international relations theories to the analysis, namely realism, liberalism, and social constructivism. Subsequently, I will sum up underlying concepts in order to be able to refer back to them throughout the following chapters.

Realism is one of the key international relations perspectives on international politics. According to this theory, power and self-interest guide politics (Heywood, 2011). It is based on the premise that humans are naturally selfish,

competitive and egoistic, which reflects in the way they lead states. According to realism, diverging national interests inevitably result in conflict among states. To protect their national interests and pursue security, states do not refrain from resorting to military means. Furthermore, a key characteristic of the political system, according to realism, is the rule of international anarchy; the absence of authority that stands above the sovereign state. Thus, there is nothing like universal moral principles or human rights that guide state behaviour, although states might be aware of moral principles. Neorealists furthermore argue that states can only rely on themselves as they do not trust each other and therefore primarily practice self-help (Dunne & Hanson, 2009, Heywood, 2011). Chapter 5 will use this theory to analyse European countries' response to the refugee crisis through the lens of security concerns.

Liberalism is the second main international relations theory, which has been dominating Western political thought since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Heywood, 2011). It centres around the idea that competing state interests can be balanced and harmonized and that conflict is reconcilable. Liberal thinkers also believe in the importance of state sovereignty. However, one of its key themes concerns liberal institutionalism, which assumes that order can only be imposed from above. Thus, just as the sovereign state safeguards its citizens, an overarching power has to uphold order in the international realm. The United Nations (UN) are one of these bodies established to govern the international political realm to achieve collective security. It does so on the basis of individuals' rights (i.e. human rights), which are enshrined in national constitutions and international humanitarian law, and that public authorities have to respect (Dunne & Hanson,

2009). While realists emphasize relative gains, liberalists argue that absolute gains rule states' behaviour as they are willing to cooperate if this enables them to gain in real terms (Heywood, 2011). Chapter 5 will analyse Europe's response to the refugee crisis with respect to this theory.

Social constructivism is an approach to understanding relationships in international relations rather than a substantive theory (Dunne & Hanson, 2009; Heywood, 2011). As analytical tool, it emphasizes individuals' interpretation of the world around them, identity and ideational factors such as beliefs, values and assumptions. Social constructivism is based on the notion that there is not one specific way international politics function, as realism and liberalism hold, but that individuals and groups construct their world themselves. Wendt (1992) described it as a bridge between these two mainstream theories and coined the notion that "anarchy is what states make of it" (p. 395). Nations are thus defined by their members, and world politics are fluid as nation states and other actors change their perceptions and thus their behaviour (Heywood, 2011). Social constructivism also puts particular emphasis on shared moral principles, norms and values. This view does not regard human rights as opposing sovereignty, as realism does, but as legitimizing statehood (Dunne & Hanson, 2009). Given that this thesis is especially concerned with refugees and volunteers, social constructivism is particularly relevant as it recognizes the significance of non-state actors in international politics, while realism and liberalism focus especially on state actors. The discussion in chapters 4, 5, and 6 will refer back to social constructivism.

This section has introduced theory and analytical tools that I will refer back to throughout the thesis. The next sections will focus on refugees as a special subcategory of migrants, the category's development and definition.

## **2.2. From Migrants to Refugees**

A distinction of different kinds of migration is usually approached through analysing the migrants' incentive to move. The most basic separation is then into forced and voluntary migration, which corresponds with displacement and economically driven motivations respectively (Black, 2001; Cabot, 2014; Castles, 2003; Speare, 1974). The two lie at opposite ends of a continuum with human trafficking occupying the extreme end on the forced migration side. A trafficked person is transported through the use of force and for the purpose of exploitation (Anderson, 2014). Relating to the continuum, forced migrants are often considered to retain a certain degree of choice in their decision to leave (Cabot, 2014; Speare 1974; Zolberg, Suhrke, & Aguayo, 1989). Peterson (as cited in Speare, 1974, p. 89) created a new category situated between forced and free migration, which he calls *impelled migration*, for those facing strong push factors, but still having a certain freedom of choice in the decision of whether to leave or not.

I identified two main realms that literature often separates incentives for forced migration into, namely the ecological and political. Those in the former category include people who are forced to leave their homes due to development plans (e.g. hydropower projects), environmental degradation (e.g. droughts), or other natural disasters (e.g. volcanic eruptions) (Castles, 2003; Colson, 2003; Hugo and

Bun, 1990). Incentives of people fleeing persecution or other threats to their persons have their origin in the political realm.

When looking at politically motivated, forced migration, different kinds of migration are also distinguished based on the destination of the displaced person, which can lie within the country of origin (internally displaced) or across international borders. In his comparison of internal and international migration, Speare (1974) found that most internal migration is voluntary, that is, motivated by economic considerations, while political factors often play a more important role than economic ones in international migration. Zolberg et al. (1989) identify a key question that has to be asked: is relief for people leaving their homes involuntarily due to political reasons possible in the country of origin or just through granting them refuge outside the national borders? If the latter is the case, those people have a strong claim for special assistance from abroad as they demonstrate distinctive and urgent needs (Zolberg et al., 1989).

In summary, this thesis focuses on a subgroup of migrants that is characterized by relatively involuntary, politically motivated movement across national borders. Those are the people commonly referred to as refugees, a category whose definition is laid out surprisingly flexibly in terms of interpretations and use. Black (2001) provides a glimpse into various academics' works that argue for such a wide spectrum of the category that if one wanted to combine them all into one broad definition, almost any migrant could be described as a refugee. However, before having a closer look at definitions, I put the development of the refugee category into historic context.



### **2.3. Refugees in Historic Context**

Considering that cornerstones of the international refugee protection scheme were set up in interaction with and response to European refugee crises, this is a Eurocentric history review. Black (2001) argues that refugee studies have always been linked to policy developments. Indeed, most research focuses on the development of the refugee category in relation to milestones in refugee policy during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which standardized techniques in managing mass displacement. This period therefore brought the refugee as a category of global dimension into existence (Malkki, 1995). However, the term refugee has been recorded to be used in France as early as 1573 (Zolberg et al., 1989) in the context of religious persecution. Religious refugees were the only people recognized as refugees until mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, when religious persecution in Europe became generally absent and therefore anyone who was persecuted could be considered a refugee. Henceforward, conflicts were fought about political ideology and these, accordingly, produced political refugees.

#### **2.3.1. Refugee Crises Following World War I and II**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century experienced several severe refugee crises resulting in the development of an international refugee regime (Zolberg et al., 1989). When the Russian exodus following the 1917 Revolution, and civil war, coupled with a famine had produced 800,000 poor refugees without legal protection by 1921, the League of Nations appointed Fridtjof Nansen to tackle the problem (Long, 2013). He centred his protection regime on facilitating refugees' onward movement and in doing so, their chances to find employment. He introduced the so-called Nansen Passport, which provided them with legal status and rights and

is the basis of contemporarily issued travel-documents for refugees.

Subsequently, World War I resulted in an estimated 9.5 million displaced in 1926.

Because this sustained an unprecedented number in Europe, it is considered the first major refugee crisis of the century. Security concerns evolving from this number led to increased immigration restrictions in European countries.

Additionally, the circumstances brought about the development of international institutions pertaining to refugees. For instance, a central office under the administration of the League of Nations was established to temporarily deal with the World War I refugees (Zolberg et al., 1989).

Once this flood of refugees abated, the development of nationalistic regimes in Europe led to the next wave (Zolberg et al., 1989). This caused the League of Nations to appoint another High Commissioner in 1933, this time specifically to tackle the issue of refugees leaving Germany. In the same year, a convention regarding the international status of refugees specified the rights of recognized refugees. The interwar period thus led to a refined refugee category made tangible through specialized agencies. Additionally, this development detached refugees from particular nation-states and made them an international responsibility to be shared by the international community (Zolberg et al., 1989).

The second European refugee crisis evolved through World War II. The war had displaced around 30 million Europeans, 11 million of those internationally and in need of assistance (Zolberg et al., 1989). Additionally, refugees fleeing from post-liberation struggles and conflicts between Eastern and Southern Europe joined that number. This period added the notion of innocence to the discussion, as

many refugees came to be considered complicit in the Nazi regime or deserving their victimhood (Long, 2013; Zolberg et al., 1989). During the war, refugees had been classified as a military problem, and therefore fell under military responsibility. However, this shifted towards the recognition of refugees as an international social or humanitarian problem with the formation of international organizations in the post-war period (Malkki, 1995). Through the International Refugee Organization (IRO), which was established in 1946 to tend to remaining World War II refugees, the international refugee regime moved closer to a universalistic approach, because the IRO shifted attention from the collective to individuals. The Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) succeeded the IRO after three years, initially focussing on European refugees exclusively.

The critical event after World War II was the adoption of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CRSR) in 1951 (UNHCR, 2010), which is still the guiding light in refugee research and policy up until today (Long, 2013; Malkki, 1995; Zolberg et al., 1989). Therefore, the year 1951 is regularly marked as a turning point in the international refugee regime. It shifted attention from solving imminent European refugee crises to a more universal approach. Additionally, it placed refugees separately instead of in a sub-category of migrants, a distinction widely contested and at the basis of many debates evolving around refugee definitions (Long, 2013). The CRSR was initially restricted to European people who fled their homes before 1951. However, in 1967, reacting to increased refugee flows in the developing world, a protocol (UNHCR, 2010) removed these time and space limitations (Malkki 1995; Zolberg et al., 1989).

### **2.3.2. Globalization and South-North Refugee Flows**

The third refugee crisis of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was invoked by deteriorating circumstances in developing countries (i.e. establishment and contestation of national borders or impoverishment through extraction), coupled with economic stagnation in industrialized countries (e.g. the energy crisis). In other words, the crisis consists of the movement of refugees from the developing to the developed world (Malkki, 1995; Zolberg et al., 1989). Due to rising numbers eligible for the refugee status, efforts were made to keep it exceptional and states once more increased limitations to immigration. Nevertheless, countries also started to grant residence permits on humanitarian grounds from the 1960s onwards, the so-called B-status (Zolberg et al., 1989), which is important for this thesis as most of the people whom it is primarily concerned with would only get asylum on humanitarian grounds.

Increasingly globalized migration flows as a result of growing mobility characterized the 1990s and early 2000s (Castles, 2000; 2003). Globalization also brought about causes and patterns of forced migration that were more complex than before (Zetter, 2007). Most migration now takes place from the global South to the North, making Europe one of the main destinations for migrants (Castles, 2003). While non-governmental organisations (NGOs) used to be the primary actors, governments and the global North are now the bodies dealing with refugees (Zetter, 2007). Earlier policy bodies reacted mainly with short-term relief measures in response to refugee issues (Zolberg et al., 1989). However, since the 1990s, humanitarian actors have increasingly employed development aid instead of, or in addition to, emergency assistance to tackle root causes

(Gabiam, 2016). The boundaries between different kinds of migration now threaten to blur, not least exemplified by literature advocating for the recognition of “environmental refugees” (see e.g., Myers, 2001) or the common references to “economic refugees” and other loaded labels in the media or political discourse (Zetter, 2007).

## **2.4. Defining the Refugee**

As the preceding history review showed, perceptions of the refugee have changed over time. The term’s definition is still contested and constantly reshaped. This section will review the fundamental definitions of the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 2010), extensions to them and additional characteristics of the refugee. It will then clarify the definition used in this thesis, in order to build the basis for the following analysis and discussion. Finally, it will refer to the special position of the refugees that this thesis is concerned with, as they are still on their journey.

### **2.4.1. The Definition in the Convention and Protocol**

The most commonly used definition, though also one of the narrowest, is the one of the 1951 CRSR (UNHCR, 2010), which states in Article 1, § A that a refugee is any person who

[a]s a result of events before 1 January 1951 and 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.

In 1967, the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 2010) responded to shortcomings in the Convention consisting of its exclusive referral to people who became refugees before 1<sup>st</sup> January 1951, as well as the occurrence of new refugee situations since 1951. The Protocol omits the first part -“as a result of events before 1 January 1951”- and therewith removes time and geographical limitations to make the definition more universal. Migrants falling under this definition are known as statutory refugees (Zolberg et al., 1989). However, not everyone in need of refuge qualifies for assistance according to it; those are referred to as “de-facto refugees” (Worster, 2012).

#### **2.4.2. Extensions to the Convention and Protocol**

Both, Convention and Protocol, include a recommendation stating that

[t]he Conference expresses the hope that the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees will have a value as an example exceeding its contractual scope and that all nations will be guided by it in granting so far as possible to persons on their territory as refugees who would not be covered by the terms of the Convention, the treatment for which it provides (UNHCR, 2010).

This recommendation appeals to states to extend the narrow definition of the Convention (Worster, 2012). Indeed, policymakers and researchers likewise continue to discuss, reinterpret, and extend the 1951/1967 definition.

Fundamental to this discussion is the perception that this definition focused on persecution excludes certain groups of people who are otherwise commonly regarded as refugees (Keely, 1981). The important extension for this research is the inclusion of people fleeing war as already done by several regional organizations (Nobel, 1985; Worster, 2012). Inspiration for most of those is the

Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (1969) by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Its definition includes people fleeing “external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order” (p. 2). The Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization’s so-called Bangkok Principles (2001) and the Declaration on Refugees, Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America (1984), called the Cartagena Declaration, adapted this extension as well. The Rio de Janeiro Declaration (2000, p. 1) added “victims of serious and generalized violence of human rights” to their definition.

Academic research parallels those additions. Nobel (1985) considers the OAU Convention’s definition to solve much of the problem de-facto refugees pose, because it includes warlike events or serious disturbances of public order. He goes on to summarize the key elements of qualifying as a refugee as firstly, well-founded fear of being persecuted and secondly, facing a threat to life, safety and freedom through events seriously disturbing public order. He stresses that “no one is a refugee under international law until he has managed to leave his country of nationality or origin” (p. 45). Zolberg et al. (1989) identify the classic refugee type as people fleeing a life-threatening danger posed by persecution through the government grounded in their membership of a specific group without provocation from their side. However, after examining cases that deviate from the classic type, they formulate their own definition: A refugee is somebody leaving the country of origin due to a well-founded fear of violence initiated by an internal agent (or resulting from an external or internal conflict, or through imposed conditions rendering normal life impossible) directed against dissenters

or a specific target group. This implies that refugees can only be assisted abroad and have a strong claim to a special form of assistance. Their approach is therewith founded on the distinctive and urgent needs people have (Zolberg et al., 1989). Olson (as cited in Hugo and Bun, 1990, p. 22) argues that refugees have to leave their homes involuntarily due to changes in their environment that do not allow a regular continuation of their lives. Zetter (1988) stresses that, because discussion of definitions was the heart of refugee studies, the Journal of Refugee Studies keeps its interpretation of the term relatively open by including internally displaced and asylum seeking persons. It excludes, however, migrants who moved generally voluntarily.

### **2.4.3. Additional Characteristics of the Refugee**

Most written definitions contain the following key elements: 1) Forces beyond the control of the affected person conveying a certain degree of powerlessness; 2) a threat to life, which, 3) cannot be escaped or relieved within the country's national borders. Such definitions forming the main body of the discussion around adequate classification and characterization are grounded in the assumption that there is something like the real or genuine refugee who has to be found in order to grant him special rights, protection and assistance (Cabot, 2014). This point is of key relevance to this thesis, as subsequent chapters will refer back to it, particularly Chapter 5. Zetter (1988) writes that “[t]he label ‘refugee’ both stereotypes and institutionalises a status” (p. 1).

Institutionalization is reflected in the fact that people might claim they are refugees, but only profit from entitlements this category brings once it is confirmed that their claim is legally valid; in other words, when officials



transform them from *asylum seekers* into *refugees* (Cabot, 2014; Zolberg et al., 1989) (see Chapter 4). Cabot (2014) examined the processes governing eligibility determination for people claiming to be refugees in an Athens-based organization. She stresses the flexibility inherent in fitting cases into set definitions. The stereotype that Zetter (1988) mentioned plays a role in social construction, which is another factor that influences genuineness of a refugee. The term *refugee* bears emotional connotations and assumed features an authentic refugee is supposed to have. In public consciousness and common media depictions, this turns refugees into elusive figures with histories of violence; they are victims, poor, oppressed, vulnerable, racialized, and othered (Cabot, 2014; Zolberg et al., 1989). Chapter 5 will examine these dynamics as it shows how refugees are processed on Chios in order to identify genuine refugees, and how volunteers and refugees define the genuine refugee and perceive assumptions and media portrayals.

Another approach to applying the term could be to accept the self-definition of people identifying as refugees (Zolberg et al., 1989). However, this seems rather uncommon. In fact, none of the reviewed literature took the refugees' experience into serious consideration, although Zetter (1988) states expressing refugees' voices as the Journal of Refugee Studies' central objective. Instead, literature focuses on outer circumstances and conclusions drawn from talking about and not with refugees. The self-definition is important for this research since the people it is concerned with have not completed the legal step from asylum seekers to refugees, and some might not do so at all. The *fake* refugees still have to be separated from the genuine ones. Yet, all of them assume to be able to

present a story, be it experienced or invented (see Chapter 5), which confirms their *refugeeness*; therewith opening Europe's supporting arms to them. In other words, they identify as refugees themselves. In the definition of refugee employed in this thesis, I take into account that the people the research is concerned with refer to themselves as refugees, although they have not been officially recognized as such.

This brings me back to powerlessness as an integral part of the refugee experience. I have already mentioned powerlessness in connection with their choice to migrate and within the context of the refugee figure's social construction. Now, I refer to the way people occupying positions higher up in the social or legal hierarchy, be it aid providers, researchers or state authorities, deal with them. Refugees are talked about, represented, and stripped of possibilities to act and provide for themselves based on the assumption that they need help. Refugees find themselves in a vicious cycle where they need to ask a state for protection, which results in a loss of agency once that state starts processing their application for asylum, which in turn deprives them of means to protect themselves (see Ignatieff, 2000). Zetter (1988; 2007) refers to this circumstance as institutionalised dependency. Refugees are considered victims of fate, stereotypes, and authorities; not persons with agency. Regardless of attempts to find an objective definition for *refugee*, it is an emotionally loaded term that implies victimhood, loss of agency and a call for intervention. Chapter 4 will illustrate this point as it describes refugees' dependency on authorities in the camps to provide them with what they need. Chapter 6 is also based on this notion as it argues that the EU has to provide assistance to refugees on Chios

because their political decisions strand them there without the means to care for themselves.

#### 2.4.4. Applied Definition in this Thesis

Zolberg et al. (1989) warn researchers of adopting policy definitions since studies built on such a foundation would legitimize instead of question and improve on-going practices. With the previous discussion in mind, my use of the term in this research is defined as follows:

The category *refugee* applies to any person who,  
> owing to a well-founded fear of a threat to life or freedom,  
> due to  
> persecution on grounds of  
> affiliation with a particular group or  
> accusations against the individual person on non-  
criminal grounds  
> or events seriously disturbing public order,  
> which the national institutions are unable or unwilling to relieve  
> seeks safety outside the country of nationality.

The term bears  
> an obligation for authorities other than the usually responsible ones for this person to provide exceptional protection,  
> which puts refugees under authoritative structures  
> that render them victims who require intervention into their lives,  
> therefore reducing their agency and making them subject to controlled living conditions.

A person who identifies as a refugee belongs to that category until authorities classify them otherwise.

It excludes people who committed crimes as specified in the CRSR under Article 1 §F.

This definition builds the foundation for the subsequent analysis and discussion as it defines the people who entered the EU via Greece and stay on Chios, are refugees.

#### **2.4.5. Refugees on their Journey**

Finally, after specifying the term refugee, attention should be given to the temporal-spatial distance between origin and destination of refugees. The overwhelming majority of research focuses either on the causes of migration or on the effects on migrants or their host communities once they arrived. This neglects the journeys in between the starting and end point, which have profound influence on the refugee experience (BenEzer & Zetter, 2014). If attention is given to the journey, then it is with the goal of combating illegal trafficking and border crossing, that is, trying to find ways to stop the journey. In this research, I focus on one specific point on the journey of a significant number of refugees, namely their entrance point to Europe, on Chios. The desired destination of their journeys is not reaching Greece, but Western Europe. That political decisions strand them on islands in Greece only prolongs the temporal dimension of their journey, but by no means constructs Chios as the final destination point in their minds. This point is examined in greater detail in Chapter 4.

In summary, this chapter specified that I conduct this research's analysis with special references to anthropology and international relations theory.

Furthermore, it distinguished refugees from other migrants, put the development of this category into historic context and discussed definitions of the term, pointing to the reluctance of literature to acknowledge refugees' self-definition.

Lastly, I indicated that this study examines refugees who are still on their journey, as opposed to most research's focus on their departure or destination. In order to understand the refugees' humanitarian situation on Chios and the overall

consequences of the ETD, the next chapter illuminates the circumstances on the research site, the Greek island Chios.

### 3. Research Site and Methodology

The red sun pulls itself over the horizon to my left. Slowly, her light spreads over the shimmering surface of the Aegean Sea and douses Chios' coast into an orange haze. It is 6 am and I am wrapped in a blanket as the wind sweeps over the hilltop, which fellow volunteers came to call *Watchtower*. Once again, I gaze over the small strip of sea between the island's alleviated cliff that I am on and the mountains on the other side, which mark Turkish territory. A small fishing boat passes close to the moorings of a little Greek village situated at sea level to my left. A big grey ship cuts through the waves halfway between Greece and Turkey, this time from right to left. It is a NATO ship, which patrols steadily between the two countries. Occasionally, I catch a glimpse of a slightly smaller boat that moves on another route. Through the telescope, I can see the Dutch flag it carries. This is one of the European Union's border control boats belonging to Frontex.

Over and over, I skim the water's surface for a small boat with many people crammed on it, but there is none. It has been windy during the last nights and conditions are still far from optimal for a crossing, but people in the camps told us their friends or family were waiting on the other side, ready to depart as soon as their smugglers would call them. As the sun rises and starts to warm the air, the other two volunteers who shared the Watchtower morning shift with me and I go back to catch an hour of sleep before our team meets for the daily briefing.

Refugee boats rarely arrive in daylight. They cross the invisible border between Turkish and Greek territory in darkness so neither the Turkish coast guards, nor Greek authorities, NATO or Frontex detect them before they reach European

waters. The previous description is just a glimpse into what I learned during my time on Chios, which is the topic of this chapter.

While the previous chapter provided necessary background information to analyse and discuss the issue at hand, this chapter gives an overview of the research site and methods employed for the gathering of information that undergird this study. Thus, it illustrates the process that led to the formulation of this thesis' argument that the refugees' humanitarian situation on Chios and the overall consequences of the EU-Turkey Deal (ETD) are a manifestation of a European crisis and requires that the EU assumes responsibility for refugees it stranded on the islands. First, I outline some basic information about the chosen research site. In the main part, I expand on the methods employed to retrieve data. These include three parts: 1) participant observation among volunteers, 2) hanging out with refugees and having casual conversation, and 3) conducting formal interviews.

### **3.1. Chios as a Research Site**

#### **3.1.1. The Island Chios**

I spent three weeks, from July 14 to August 6, 2016 on Chios (for a map, see Figure 1 in Appendix C.). With 900 km<sup>2</sup>, it is the fifth largest island of Greece ("Chios Island", 2016). Its population is 54.000, of which 29.000 people live in the largest town that is the island's administrative and commercial centre and has the main port ("Chios Town", 2016). Volunteers and refugees commonly call it *Chios Town*, *Chios*, or just *The Town*. To avoid confusion with the island's name, I will

subsequently refer to it by the name locals frequently use: *Chora*, a common name in Greece for an island's main town. Chios is one of the main entrance points into Europe for refugees at the moment. With 40,400 entries in 2016 as of mid December, Chios is the Greek island with the second-largest number of entries after Lesbos, which has had 96,300 arrivals to date (UNHCR, 2016a).

Apart from its significance as entry point to Europe, I chose Chios, because a close and trusted friend I met in Germany in the course of an interviewing project in January 2016 had agreed to join me during my fieldwork. Mohammed had arrived at Chios as a Syrian refugee himself two years earlier and now holds asylum status in Germany. That the choice fell on Chios to conduct the fieldwork had partly to do with the opportunity to compare the current situation with his experience from two years earlier. If I subsequently describe certain actions in the first person plural, that is because he participated in those research tasks. I will elaborate further on Mohammed's role during the research period in the course of this chapter.

### **3.1.2. Three Refugee Camps on Chios**

At the time I was on Chios, three refugee camps existed.<sup>1</sup> Vial was the first camp that every refugee entering the island was brought to. It was located in the mountains, surrounded by fences and secured by security personnel that only let in staff from big organizations like UNHCR and Red Cross (for a map, see Figure 2 in Appendix C.). It functioned as registration centre and official appointments like

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<sup>1</sup> The situation is very dynamic and subject to change, so camp structures have changed since.



interviews were held there as well. It was the most regulated camp, apparently under the administration of the Greek government in collaboration with the military. Volunteers told me it had been entirely locked, that is, residents were not allowed to leave it, earlier this year. However, at the time of my visit, refugees could freely leave and enter through the main gate without being checked.

Volunteers not belonging to the permitted organizations sometimes managed to sneak in, but were mostly stopped by the guards. I only saw it from the outside and had some unpleasant encounters with harsh personnel at occasions when trying to deliver aid supplies to new arrivals waiting for registration (see Chapter 4).

The other two camps were located in Chora (for a map, see Figure 3 in Appendix C.). The smaller one was called Dipethe, which had developed around an empty building usually referred to as *The Church* directly next to the main town square and park. People were sleeping in the supposedly former church building and under tarpaulins spanned somewhat chaotically between a few trees and houses. Souda was built into the gorge-like gap between Chora's castle and residential area in a somewhat more organized manner. There were several big tents, into which some people were either putting camping tents or building provisional screens from fabric or materials found in the streets or the beach to create some feeling of a private space. There were also some living units for bigger families with a door to close but not made of stable material, and some tents built of tarpaulins that looked somewhat professionally set up. However, people were also sleeping in the spaces between those units and had extended the camp with improvised shelters stretching onto the beach. All tarpaulins bore the UNHCR

logo, but many of them were torn, provisionally put up with drift wood or tied together with what looked like ripped clothes or socks. In my last days on the island, all camps were so overfull (see Squires, 2016), that the people were left with only a camping mat and a blanket by the NGO Samaritan's Purse each. They had to find a space to sleep by themselves and some of them set up their shelters on the stony beach out of driftwood and with their blankets as roof, because nobody provided tarpaulins. Just outside the camp, at one of its two entrances, several NGOs had their containers as spaces for offices, storage and contact.

Both camps were openly accessible and within a ten-minute walk of each other. An UNHCR-sponsored bus commuted several times a day between all three camps to enable the isolated residents of Vial to visit friends or the town, or to make use of services provided in Souda; and for residents of Dipethe and Souda to reach official appointments or friends in Vial. Their official administration was not entirely clear and highly reliant on NGOs. The municipality assumed responsibility for Souda, in collaboration with the UNHCR; Dipethe's organization was quite diffuse and somewhat more attributed to bigger NGOs. However, even Vasillis, the representative of the municipality responsible for Souda<sup>2</sup>, could not tell me which organization was in charge of Dipethe. The number of residents in each camp unclear as well. While Vasillis (personal communication B.8, August 02, 2016) spoke of 600 people in Souda, Andoni (personal communication B.7, July 29, 2016) told me they delivered 1100 portions of food to Souda. He said Dipethe received 350 meals, and a hotel where pregnant women, new mothers and very vulnerable cases were hosted got another 60.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B.8 for the transcript of my interview with him.

### 3.1.3. The Research's Pillars

The methodology of this research rests on three pillars. Academic literature on migration and refugees builds the basis, as discussed in Chapter 2. The second pillar consists of records from government agencies and other organizations, which will play a supporting role in following chapters as they will provide quantitative data and put my findings into contemporary political context. The third and main pillar comprises qualitative research conducted among refugees and volunteers in Greece. Subsequently, I will elaborate further on the methodology of that fieldwork.

The research is based on qualitative data retrieved through interviews, observation and conversation. The core of qualitative research consists of natural inquiry, which studies everyday situations with as little disturbance through the researcher's presence as possible (Beuving & de Vries, 2015; Neuman, 2014). Such research is based on the interpretivist belief that one can only understand societies if one understands its members' actions and views, which are the building blocks of the social. It therefore includes numerous perspectives and integrates meaning with experience, or as Neuman (2014, p. 438) writes, "Field researchers try to get inside the 'heads' or meaning systems of diverse members and then switch back to an outsider or research viewpoint." To achieve that, one does not set pre-assigned boundaries, but instead identifies *foreshadowed problems* (Malinowski, 1922) and adjusts and focuses the research as it proceeds. Such research designs stand in contrast to positivist ones that seek to find universal laws in society through employing standardized procedures in controlled research sites, conventionally equated with quantitative approaches

(Beuving & de Vries, 2015). With this in mind, I will first elaborate on the methods of the observation and conversation part, then on the interviews.

### **3.2. Participant Observation as Volunteer**

Prior to entering the research site, I was particularly interested in refugees' conditions on the outer borders of Europe in the face of the European refugee crisis. In order to gain access to such sites, I contacted organizations working on the ground. Ultimately, I chose to come to Chios as a volunteer embedded with Chios Eastern Shore Response Team (CESRT), which I located through public Facebook groups. CESRT is a team founded by a local, Toula (see personal communication B.9, Aug. 03, 2016), and coordinates volunteers that come to Chios independently from NGOs. If I refer to volunteers in subsequent chapters, I mean such individuals who came to Chios independently of big organizations and without receiving payment. Thus, I decided to look at the issue of the refugee crisis from the perspective of refugees and volunteers.

Every morning (except for Sundays) at 9 am, the team would meet at the *Warehouse*, where CESRT's supplies, mainly donated clothes, were stored in boxes piling up all the way to the roof. In those meetings, held sitting on wooden pallets in the shade of the building, news about boat landings or sightings of the previous night, updates on new developments, and ideas were discussed, and tasks for that day assigned. Since CESRT's main priority was attending to boat landings, there were people on night shifts to monitor the harbour, the beaches and sea, additional volunteers prepared to bring supplies in case of a landing, and some

ensuring coordination through the *Alpha Phone*<sup>3</sup>. During daytime, regular projects included distributions of clothes and other stock in Souda, children's activities at all camps and with unaccompanied minors living in a secluded orphanage, cleaning the island's beaches of abandoned refugee boats and life vests, and sorting the Warehouse. Additionally, CESRT closely collaborated with other teams and organizations. This ranged from helping in the food kitchens if they were short-handed, or joining swimming classes set up by the first-aid team SMH due to decreased demand for their medical services on the shore, to renovating the apartment, which would become the *Athena Centre for Women* set up by a Swiss organization.

Additionally, everyone was encouraged to initiate new projects, improve existing ones or meet newly evolving needs. Its bundling of volunteers' creativity and workforce with long-term helpers' contacts, experience and CESRT's resources made CESRT extremely efficient in meeting needs spontaneously. To name but one example, during my stay on Chios, large-scale wildfires broke out. Since strong winds meant a decreased probability of boat crossings, this allowed a reduced presence on the shore, so instead, CESRT volunteers started missions to bring water and food to the firefighters in the mountains. The team was very flexible in its approach, allowing volunteers to decide on a day-to-day basis what they wanted to do and what they found important in helping refugees. Making personal contacts with camp residents, talking, and listening were even encouraged as an important form of assistance. My quest to interview people was

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<sup>3</sup> Exact procedures of patrolling changed according to new developments by adapting to assumed changes in smuggler routes or arrival times, weather conditions or support and action of other groups.

therefore perceived as another important way to possibly improve the situation. While I usually participated in their running projects during the mornings, I kept the afternoons free to socialize with refugees and conduct interviews.

Working as a CESRT volunteer embodies participant observation, a method widely used in anthropological studies. The underlying principle is to not only study one's subjects from the distance, but to gain a deeper understanding through direct involvement in their lives, a method considered to be first implemented by ethnographer Malinowski (see 1922; 1929) (Beuving & de Vries, 2015). Participation in CESRT projects led me to learn about volunteers' views of the situation and their own role in it. Furthermore, it let me experience first-hand the struggles they faced in their work and during encounters with refugees, bigger organizations and authorities (see Chapter 4). Since some of the volunteers had been on Chios earlier, they could also give an account of the changes that had occurred within the previous months, providing much needed perspective.

### **3.3. Hanging out with Refugees**

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the refugees' lives and their perspective on the situation, I spent as much time as possible in and around the camps with them. The aid distributions in Souda, which I attended regularly as a volunteer, were held on workdays in the mornings. Once they finished, I usually took off the orange vest, which identified me as CESRT volunteer, and spent the rest of the day *hanging out* with refugees, as Rodgers (2004) calls the small-scale qualitative research approach that involves interpersonal contact on an informal basis.

### **3.3.1. Academic Foundation of Hanging out with Refugees**

While some academics warn of such approaches (see e.g., Jacobsen & Landau, 2003), Rodgers (2004) defends its usefulness for hearing individual voices on a local, experience-based level, appreciating complexity independently of pre-established frameworks, and meeting refugees as humans rather than mere research subjects. His approach corresponds to the method of naturalistic inquiry discussed earlier. Jacobsen and Landau (2003), on the contrary, argue for well-planned methodological approaches that gather quantifiable data and are less prone to bias, claiming these are therefore more representative and more ethical.

Jacobsen and Landau's approach would fall under the positivist research design mentioned earlier. I agree with them insofar that the methodology should be clear and open about shortcomings, and I consider their argument relevant. Beuving and de Vries (2015) identify four tools that counteract the danger of subjectivity, which Jacobsen and Landau warn of. Those are triangulation of various data collection methods, note taking, rechecking interpretations with informants, and using grounded theory. The latter is a systematic procedure deriving theoretical concepts from empirical research (Strauss, 1987). It generalizes through finding patterns in individual experiences; then it links such generalizations in explaining the studied issue. In grounded theory, the research process is based on theoretical debates with open-ended concepts and is perpetuated by analysing data already during collection (Beuving & de Vries, 2015). I sought to cater for all those provisions.

Another point in favour of hanging out is that it attempts to bring researcher and researched onto equal levels. My experience on Chios taught me that people often have different versions of their story for official occasions or listeners who are potentially linked to authorities (e.g. the UNHCR), and for volunteers of independent, small organizations whom they trust. I expect that a researcher who conducts a survey in Souda or Dipethe and appears to be backed by the UNHCR would receive the official version of their story, which is not necessarily the one closest to actual facts (see Chapter 5).

Hanging out with refugees in the camps might also raise safety concerns. While I did avoid going to the camps at night, I always moved freely in the camps during the days. I felt entirely safe, especially as residents generally sustained a welcoming atmosphere. I never witnessed escalating fights and I was sure I could resort to CESRT members or emergency numbers, and that I knew enough people in the camps who would help me if problems occurred. After a while, the refugees also realized that I was usually together with Mohammed, which earned me additional respect.

### **3.3.2. Key Informants and Mohammed's Role**

Hanging out usually took place in the shade of trees close to the camps where people would meet in the afternoon heat, in tents following invitations for tea or lunch, or in Chora's park, while volunteers organized children's activities and adults seized the opportunity to meet in the trees' shade. I consider four people of



those that I meet on an almost daily basis as my key informants: 1) Omar<sup>4</sup>, a 17-year old Kurdish Syrian who was on the first boat whose landing I witnessed. He came with two younger brothers and his mother, speaks Kurdish, Arabic and English fluently and learned some Turkish before he crossed to Europe. 2) Mhamid<sup>5</sup>, a 22-year-old, came alone and had already been on Chios for several weeks when I arrived. He spoke decent English, but often discussed complex issues in Arabic with Mohammed before they would then together translate his point to me. 3) Abu Mohammed, a father of four who came with his wife and children, only spoke Arabic, and treated us to tea, coffee and food on a regular basis.

4) The last key informant is my 22-year old travel companion Mohammed. I am aware that I experienced Chios and refugee issues broadly through his lens. Most of the people we hung out with and interviewed were to some degree chosen by him, because he was usually the one who made the first contact. People that he did not like much were typically not the ones we would spend extended periods of time with. As there is a language barrier with Farsi-speaking Afghans, the second largest ethnicity in the camps, neither Mohammed nor I could have had

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<sup>4</sup> The names have not been changed, since I gave all people mentioned in this thesis the choice to stay anonymous, but none had objections. I discussed possible risks to their persons linked to this choice with several interviewees and came to the conclusion that they all bear relatively common Arab names, which cannot be linked easily to their persons, and even if they were identified, it is extremely unlikely that they would face negative consequences. Nevertheless, I decided to not mention last names even if they stated them in the interviews.

<sup>5</sup> Since the overwhelming number of people named *Mohammed* made some sort of distinction necessary, I chose to transcribe his name to 'Mhamid' and one of the interviewees who is introduced later as 'Mohamed'. If one translates the Arabic characters literally, most forms of the name would simply be "Mhmd"; vowels are usually filled in according to taste.

conversations with most of them. Additionally, the two accessible camps were mostly populated by Syrians, while the majority of Afghans lived in Vial. Therefore, my opinions and experiences are very much informed by Syrian worldviews, filtered through the eyes of the people we made friends with, that is, mostly with whom Mohammed connected to. Most of my informants are therefore Syrian, male, educated and from the middle or upper class.

Since my Arabic skills<sup>6</sup> were not good enough to follow discussions and conversations thoroughly, I was reliant on Mohammed to summarize what people were talking about. It is likely that details were lost in this process, as he probably sometimes left out certain points that he personally did not consider important, or did not repeat parts that appeared obvious to him. After an hour-long conversation with several refugees he would sometimes simply summarize it as, “Just the same as always; They want to go to Europe and they hate the camp,” not understanding why I would want to hear the same complaints that others had previously already stated over and over again. In such cases, I kept on asking until I received more precise information.

I also frequently asked him for clarification of certain themes that came up and I was not familiar with. Furthermore, his presence was important in disclosing cultural habits to me, therefore providing me with the opportunity to fit in better, that is, to behave in appropriate ways that helped gaining trust (e.g. making certain jokes, using certain expressions or metaphors, adhering to rules of hospitality etc.). Moreover, people often seemed to associate me with Mohammed,

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<sup>6</sup> I had been studying the language for one month before going to Chios.

which opened new doors to me, because Mohammed was treated as an insider. I frequently overheard him telling of his time on Chios two years earlier, as both, refugees and volunteers, constantly wanted to hear about it. I asked more specific questions to gain a deeper understanding of his experience throughout the fieldwork. In the course of that process, we searched for exact locations on maps (like his landing point or a specific camp he had been brought to and that did not exist when I was on Chios), and he showed me significant points and explained how they had changed; for example, where the police had brought him in the first night, where exactly he had slept in *The Church*, which had grown to become Dipethe camp in the meantime, or at which spots they had been spending extended periods of time because there was free Wi-Fi.

I took notes of my experiences on Chios and kept a video diary for the first week, when the number of new impressions was too overwhelming to capture with pen and paper. I usually filmed those video clips in the evening together with Mohammed, which provided the chance to discuss situations encountered during the day, ask for clarifications, and hear his reflections on them as well. It was also a space, in which he would remember and share certain things that had been said or he was told when we were not together. Observations and casual conversations through participant observation and hanging out therefore provided me with a broad base of experiences and clues, that then guided the recorded interviews I conducted.

### **3.4. Formal Interviews**

When I started interviewing, I was particularly intrigued by two things: 1) the obvious shortcomings in basic infrastructure for the accommodation of refugees on the island, and 2) by the relationship of both volunteers and refugees, with *Europe* (see Chapter 6). Although nobody appeared to know exactly what this Europe actually was, it was omnipresent in their lives, but at the same time unapproachable. While both refugees and volunteers seemed to construct it as everything that caused the situation and everything that could solve it, there was a perceived missing link between Europe and those on the island, which made a conversation between the two instances impossible. Thus, I decided to set up the interviews in such a way that they could function as direct medium for the interviewees' voice to talk to, and not just about, Europe. Subsequently, I will elaborate on implemented methods, covering the interviews' statistics, implemented sampling, physical set up, communication, effects of camera presence, and postproduction.

#### **3.4.1. Statistics and Sampling**

I recorded 16 interviews with 24 people in total.<sup>7</sup> Eleven of the interviewees were Syrian refugees, one was a municipality representative in charge of Souda camp<sup>8</sup>, the rest were volunteers of different small organizations. All refugees came from Syria, their age ranged from 17 to 70 years, and two of them were female. There were five males among the interviewed volunteers, with the youngest being 14

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<sup>7</sup> Sometimes, people asked to bring friends with them, or married couples preferred to stay together.

<sup>8</sup> From now on, I will include this municipality representative in the bulk of volunteer interviews.

years old. As I focussed on volunteers of European origin, they came from Greece, Scotland, England, Switzerland, Spain, and Germany.

Random sampling in such settings is virtually impossible, especially because ethical considerations make voluntary participation indispensable. Apart from that, it is also not desirable for field research where sampling is not pre-determined such as in statistical research. Instead, I oriented my method on theoretical sampling, which is guided by criteria being formulated as the research develops (Beuving & de Vries, 2015; Neuman, 2014). It was relatively easy to approach volunteers while we were working together. Once the information that I was conducting interviews made its rounds, volunteers also proposed to be interviewed out of own initiative. For refugees, I was frequently reliant on Mohammed to make contact with potential interviewees, because he spoke their language. He either asked them in the course of casual conversations, or I located specific people and would tell him to approach them with my request. Since those refugees sometimes brought their friends along, snowball sampling played a role as well. Additionally, we were directly approached, because people wanted to share their thoughts or stories.

Once it became apparent that male refugees were much easier to convince of giving an interview, I actively searched for women. I spread the word at the Athena Centre of Women and received several contact numbers of women who had shown interest. However, only one of them agreed to an interview in the end, and her husband happened to sit next to her. Mohammed's presence in such situations could be interpreted as a blessing or a curse; because on the one hand I

would not have been able to communicate with her in English at all, but on the other hand, social conventions made it difficult to leave women alone in a room with a non-related male (even though I was present).

Another point I want to mention is that I did not offer material compensation for participation. All I put forth was that this was a chance to share their thoughts, which could possibly reach Europe this way. Nevertheless, some of the refugees asked after the interviews, if we could organize certain items for them (like trousers or glasses). We did so in cases we considered reasonable (the man asking for glasses, for example, turned out to have only slight vision impairment and was already owning glasses) or we brought presents later even if interviewees did not request anything.

### **3.4.2. Interviews' Set-up and Presence of the Camera**

In order to achieve my previously stated goal of examining the relationship between people on the island and Europe, I chose to film the interviews and promised participants to publish parts of the interviews online so people in Europe could see and hear them. Before elaborating on this choice's implications, I will devote more attention to the interviews' setup and execution. Volunteers were interviewed in the hotels they stayed in, at the Warehouse, or in Chora's park. Most interviews with refugees took place outside of the camps. The main reason for that was that I had asked the municipality for permission to conduct interviews and to film in the camps, which was granted to me under the conditions that I adhered to ethical standards as submitted to me on a form for press, and that I would do my best to keep my activity discrete. To follow this

request and because private spaces were rare in the camps and the heat in closed off tents was unbearable, we usually met close to the camps in a shady and relatively calm place for the interviews. Most interviews went undisturbed; however, it did happen that passers-by would spontaneously join the discussion or ask to be interviewed afterwards. The equipment used comprised a SLR camera positioned on a tripod in front of the interviewees and a separate voice recorder placed close to them. The interviewer asking the question (either Mohammed or I) would sit behind the camera. I explained to all of them that they could look at Mohammed or me and ignore the camera while talking in order to make them feel more comfortable.

If possible, I held the interviews in English. Although several volunteers voiced their insecurity about finding the right words, having a bad accent or using wrong grammar, they could all speak English well. Refugees voiced such concerns less frequently. Nevertheless, four of the interviews (eight people) were held entirely in Arabic. While Mohammed asked the questions in those cases, I was present and reminded him of additional themes or topics if the interviewees did not already cover them. I also explained to him beforehand, what was most important and which wordings he should pay special attention to.

The interviews held many characteristics of the focused interview (Merton & Kendall, 1946) and I asked open-ended questions to give people the space to take an active role and speak about matters of central importance to them. One of the guiding principles for my interviews was non-direction, which avoids missing relevant information through assuming to know what is relevant (Merton &

Kendall, 1946). For example, I always stressed in advance that the interview was about them, not me, and that they could add things even if I did not explicitly ask about them. I also briefed the interviewees about what would happen with the material, that they could stay anonymous if they wanted to, and that they could basically tell me whatever they wanted, but that I would support them through questions if needed. I also clarified that I was especially interested in the situation on the island.<sup>9</sup> From there, the interview usually developed naturally towards their relationship to Europe, faced challenges and other topics I was interested in.

I was surprised how little guidance most interviewees needed. Especially the refugees proved very eloquent in expressing themselves. I would usually ask just one or two introductory and very open questions, like “Tell me something about yourself,” or “Do you have something in mind you want to share?” This was generally enough for them to keep talking without interruption for 20 minutes or more, covering all the different areas I would have asked them about; from how they came to Greece, why and how long they were there already, to how they perceived their situation and which challenges and frustrations they faced. I attribute this eloquent performance in part to the presence of the camera.

By directing a camera at them, one could argue, I placed the interviewees on a stage on which they could be seen and heard by an audience that extended beyond me, the interviewer. Goffman (1959) put forth the concept of front-stage and back-stage; In any situation that a person is not alone, she plays a certain role,

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<sup>9</sup> The start of the interview transcript with Dinah and Alex (see personal communication B.6, July 20, 2016) provides a good example of introductory briefings I had previous to all recorded interviews.



like an actor does on the front-stage, and according to the situation, she adapts her performance. The interviewees' awareness of the audience behind the camera and the way they embraced it created a striking effect; they started to address Europe directly (see Chapter 4).

Interviewees asked them for concrete measures ("Open the borders, please"), understanding ("My religion didn't tell me to go and kill people"), or specified who they thought they were ("We are not terrorists"; "We are good people") as if they had to convince their audience. They also used the opportunity to thank volunteers, the Greek people and government, or other actors for their help. In certain situations, they shifted their glance directly into the camera as if they were actually indeed not talking to Mohammed or me, but directly to Europe. That this dynamic developed naturally without much pushing from my side illustrates the subjects' lack of means to communicate with the structures that are supposedly needed to ease their struggles. Chapter 6 will elaborate more on this dynamic.

### **3.4.3. Translating, Transcribing, Coding, and Staying in Touch**

After the interviewing process, I transcribed and translated the recordings. The transcripts can be found in Appendices A and B. If words were not understandable, I replaced them with (?) in the transcripts. If the recordings included parts that were redundant to the interview (such as interruptions through phone calls), I marked these with (...). If passages required additional clarification, I added such in parentheses. Translations of the interviews held in Arabic were done by Mohammed in collaboration with me. Because Arabic is rich in nuanced vocabulary and wordings that are not translatable into English

literally, we spent extended periods discussing concepts and trying to find appropriate translations without obscuring individuals' characteristic ways of speaking. Thus, I included extra notes in parenthesis in order to specify what the interviewee meant to say if this message would otherwise have been lost in the translation process.

My analysis of the interviews was inspired by the sequence of three types of coding that Strauss (1987) identified: 1) Open coding to condense the material into categories through locating key themes and events; 2) axial coding to combine or split those codes to form higher categories; and 3) identifying illustrating examples to the developed categories (see also Böhm, 2004; Neuman, 2014). In the course of translating and transcribing the interviews, I informally took notes of major topics that kept arising. Afterwards, I read every transcript again and marked on a separate sheet for every interviewee (i.e. if two people were interviewed at the same time, I counted them separately) through a dash which of the informally noted topics were mentioned. Furthermore, I had separate sets of topics for refugees and volunteers. During this open coding phase I also continued to adjust and add topics that I had not identified during transcribing. I then went into the axial coding phase by condensing the most frequently mentioned topics into themes. I did this separately for refugees and volunteers. For both categories, I extracted the six themes that were mentioned most often. When I compared the six themes of the refugees and volunteers, I realized that they corresponded with each other. Thus, my analysis of the interviews resulted in the identification of six major themes (see Chapter 4), for which I then found illustrating examples and quotes during the writing process.

While I analysed the data and formulated conclusions, I conferred with several of my informants to check if my interpretations resonated with them. I also used such occasions to ask more specifically about certain topics, in order to make sure I did not miss important points. These communications took place via Facebook or Skype. Staying in contact with my informants and following their journeys as they all found themselves in different circumstances only a few weeks after my departure also helped me gain more insights into the formal and informal systems guiding their lives on Chios and beyond. Likewise, it let me witness the tragic transformation from outgoing joke-tellers to depressed survivors as time passed, and how this development influenced their opinions of Europe. It is worth noting that most of my key informants from Chios are still in Greece to this date, but scattered over different locations; either still waiting for processing, or attempting to find their ways onto illegal routes after having been rejected.

This chapter has illustrated the process of gathering the data that this thesis is based on. Each of the six themes extracted from the interviews supports one part of the thesis' key argument, which holds that the refugees' humanitarian situation on Chios and the overall consequences of the ETD are a manifestation of a European crisis and require that the EU take responsibility for the refugees it continues to strand on Greek islands. Chapter 4 will elaborate on the two themes, which are related to the first part of that argument, namely the humanitarian situation of refugees on Chios. Chapter 5 is devoted to two themes that are relevant to understand the ETD's role, and Chapter 6 pertains to the role of Europe and the question of responsibility, thus covering another two themes.



## **4. Refugee and Volunteer Experiences of Chios**

The previous chapter described the methodology implemented in the fieldwork on Chios. This and the following two chapters analyse the findings as they discuss the humanitarian situation of refugees on the island within a context of a European crisis that is both cause and consequence of the EU-Turkey Deal (ETD). In order to enhance understanding of shortcomings, I move from the micro to the macro level of analysis. This chapter examines the challenges experienced on Chios by refugees and volunteers. It first presents an overview of the six major themes extracted from the interviews. It then focuses on the two themes reflecting imminent and observable problems refugees face, namely their living conditions and the state of waiting. I analyse the state of waiting on Chios through the work of the two anthropologists van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1994) on rites of passage and liminal spaces. This serves to understand the significance of the period spent on Chios on the individual level. In the last part, I discuss additional challenges that are not part of the six themes, but that do confront volunteers on Chios and highlight structural shortcomings in actors' response to the refugees on Chios.

### **4.1. Six Interview Themes**

As stated in the previous chapter, I coded the interviews of refugees and volunteers separately and extracted the six major themes for both sets of interviews according to how many interviewees mentioned these themes on their own initiative or in response to open questions. The two sets' themes correlated, although there were differing nuances to them and their order according to the

frequency of mentioning varied. Following the order of frequency in the refugee set, the themes were:

- 1) bad living conditions and insufficient care;
- 2) the state of waiting;
- 3) disappointed expectations of Europe (all three were mentioned by ten of the eleven interviewees);
- 4) presenting themselves as normal people and distinguishing themselves from bad people (each mentioned by seven interviewees);
- 5) mentioning of the ETD (mentioned by five interviewees);
- and 6) directly addressing Europe in their speech and stating concrete demands (each mentioned by five interviewees).

The order of the themes' frequency of naming differed in the volunteers' set, where eleven of the thirteen interviewees mentioned the refugees' state of waiting; the next most important theme was the reference to refugees as normal people, often including the notion of "they are like us"; eight of them talked of bad conditions in the camps; the same number mentioned the ETD; seven interviewees touched on shock and shame related to the conditions in a European context; and five addressed the audience directly while many of them proposed solutions to the issue. Since this chapter seeks to describe more clearly what refugees face on Chios, I will subsequently elaborate on the themes dealing with living conditions and the state of waiting.

## 4.2. Bad Living Conditions in the Camps

### 4.2.1. Points of Critique Stated in the Interviews

While eight volunteers said the conditions in the camps were bad, seven interviewees spoke of gaps in the provision of aid and services and mentioned that expected help was not there. See for example how Ariane described her experience of the first time she came to Chios as a volunteer (personal communication B.2, July 20, 2016):

*I was shocked when I arrived, because when there is an earthquake or when there is a flood or something, we send help and we build new villages and we build things to help people. And for sure, I was sure there will be [NGOs] here with shelters, with beds, with everything ready for people, and with food provided by the organization and like that. But when I came the first time, I was so astonished to see that people, they don't have any bed, and they don't have food, they don't have water if volunteers, they don't give to them. So, if there is no volunteer, they won't eat, they won't be able to dress, and things like that. And for me, that's totally something I [could not imagine] before.*

Ariane mentioned food supply in this quote. At least two of the three daily meals<sup>10</sup> that were distributed in Dipethe and Souda were provided by volunteers unaffiliated to big NGOs. I helped preparing the food with both groups once and interviewed Andoni from Zaporeak, the team cooking lunch (see personal communication B.7, July 29, 2016). He told me that the project was entirely financed by donations raised in Spain's Basque country, partly in the form of durable foods (e.g. beans, rice, etc.), which are then transported to Chios, and partly as money to buy fresh ingredients on the island. Their improvised kitchen space was provided to them for free by a private person and all chefs and helpers

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<sup>10</sup> I could not find out who provided breakfast, as neither refugees nor volunteers seemed to know who the people belonged to who distributed it and I always just arrived to the camps after breakfast.

were volunteers. Considering that Souda was an official camp under the administration of the municipality and UNHCR, I found it remarkable that they did not provide for one of the most basic human needs: food.

When Ariane stated that volunteers provide water, she referred to new boat arrivals. It became one of CESRT's main missions to provide the people who had just arrived from Turkey with water bottles, since they were often processed for hours on the port and in the registration centre<sup>11</sup> without access to water. In the camps, drinking water was provided. However, in Dipethe there was only one filling station, in Souda two. In both locations, usually only one tap per station worked, sometimes none. The water ran very slowly, so that people had to push the button down for several minutes to fill a 1.5 litre bottle; that led to queues building up at the taps. Because the temperatures were constantly above 30 degrees Celsius, this became a problematic circumstance. Mohamed told me (personal communication A.7, August 02, 2016):

*I have diabetes. I reach a point where I am so tired. If I want to fill a bottle of water, I have to stand for half an hour under the sun, to fill a bottle of water, to come back here and drink it.*

Food and water was but one criticism of the conditions in the camps that featured high in the refugees' interviews. Other complaints included the following (the number of interviewees who mentioned them is written up front):

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<sup>11</sup> I cannot confirm the conditions at the registration centre in Vial, as no volunteer received access to it. However, in CESRT meetings, this circumstance was discussed frequently and we were told that a UNHCR worker had confirmed in a meeting between Frontex, police, UNHCR, CESRT and other non-governmental groups operating on Chios that refugees do not have access to food or water before and during the registration process.



- (9) complaints related to tents or non-existent mattresses,
  - (8) safety concerns (including theft, robbery, fights, killing and substance abuse),
  - (6) food or water,
  - (5) weather or temperature conditions (mostly referring to heat and sun, but also fear of the winter, which would bring cold and rain),
  - (4) hygiene (including toilet and shower facilities, as well as having to wash the laundry by hand),
  - (4) space (speaking of overcrowded conditions or lack of privacy),
  - (3) insufficient healthcare,
  - (3) existing or worsening health issues (including trauma),
  - (2) noise,
- as well as humiliation and insufficient access to electricity.

In addition, refugee interviewees stated other criticisms of care and services that transcended the immediate living conditions in the camps. The biggest issue seemed to be that police did not respond to calls relating to crime and violence, which was voiced by five interviewees. Abid, for example, told the following anecdote (personal communication A.5, July 28, 2016):

*In Vial centre, there was a clash between Afghans and Syrians. It always happens that there are clashes between Syrians and Afghans. [...] The Afghans attacked the Syrians with stones and clubs. [...] Some Syrians resorted to calling the Greek police. So, the Greek police said, 'It is not our business. We didn't tell you to come here.' They got into their cars and left, and let the Syrians and Afghans fight against each other.*

Abu Mohammed said in his interview (personal communication A.4, July 23, 2016):

*Suddenly, the thief comes in and steals and goes out. You tell the police about him, the police procedure is so slow, they want proof from you; you should have taken photos while he is committing the crime.*

Later, he told us the story in a casual conversation in more detail. He had caught a refugee in the act of stealing from him, but when he wanted to press charges against the young man at the police station, he was told he should have taken a photo of the thief showing the moment of the attempted theft.

Once, when my friend Mohammed told Abu Mohammed the amusing story of how a young man, who had catcalled at me while we were walking through the camp together, was visibly uncomfortable after Mohammed had turned around to him and revealed himself as Syrian. Abu Mohammed asked where it had happened. When we described at which tent the young man and his friends had been sitting, he just replied, "That's the tent where all the thieves live." Other refugees told me as well that it was known who the thieves, troublemakers and drug dealers were, but that the police and camp authorities ignored attempts to report it. Mohamed (personal communication A.7, August 02, 2016) also mentioned it in the interview after he described how a refugee was robbed by three men the day before:

*The police did not respond and they didn't even come. And here the people know who is stealing their stuff, they know who the thieves are, and the organizers don't want to do anything.*

In the interviews, refugees also mentioned that authorities in the camps were unresponsive, that people did not receive information or were just told to wait.

*We complained to the responsible people, they say, 'Wait!' When he says this word 'wait', you feel like he doesn't care. You don't care, you cannot feel us,*

*you are just saying 'wait'.* (Mohamed, personal communication A.7, August 02, 2016)

Indeed, one of the first Arabic words any volunteer seemed to learn was *bukra*, meaning *tomorrow*. I have also heard workers of bigger NGOs and other officials saying it and I used it myself as effective tool to end discussions with demanding refugees. Other such widely used expressions were *maa fii* (*there isn't*) and *khallas* (*finish*). However, I can imagine that people become frustrated if they are told wait, *bukra*, *maa fii* and *khallas* for months. In Chapter 2, I touched on the powerlessness and loss of agency inherent in the term *refugee*. This example illustrates that they were institutionally reliant on others to approve of their requests. That they had to ask for basic needs, often resulted in a feeling of humiliation, which is connected to powerlessness as well. People who were used to having agency and were then suddenly forced to live under conditions where others organized their lives, seemed to find it hard to accept this. Susan, for example, criticised the lack of organization in general (personal communication A.7, August 02, 2016):

*The level of organization that the responsible people have is low. Maybe they don't have experience. Like, we were working with the Red Crescent [in Syria]. We were trying to organize better than this. We saw better organization than this.*

Ignatieff (2000) writes that only people who have agency, can protect themselves. That the hierarchical structures and conditions in the camps deprived them of providing for themselves, simultaneously rendered them more vulnerable. The following elaboration on refugees' tent structures illustrates this point, since restrictions in available materials and rules of authorities impeded the setting up safer living units.

#### 4.2.2. Implications of Living in Tents

Subsequently, I will elaborate on the significance of refugees are sleeping in tent-like structures on Chios. That complaints related to the tents were mentioned most often in the interviews might be connected to them embodying the lack of home, shelter and safety. The fact that people were living under tarpaulins was not only very visible, but also the epitome of living, quite literally, under bad conditions. Additionally, sleeping on the ground<sup>12</sup> symbolized the humiliating situation refugees found themselves in. Appadurai (2013) wrote in his essay “Housing and Hope” that housing forms reflect and enact fundamental matters that give meaning to human communities and that such structures contain the very meaning of its inhabitants’ humanity. Thus, housing embodies a deep significance due to its close connection to dignity. According to Appadurai (2013), housing “is where even the poorest of humans can connect shelter with their humanity”. He related this to the notion of bare citizens, which has been examined in Chapter 2. Since refugees had few practical alternatives to sleeping in the camps, they were forced to accept provided structures as lack of available materials and officials’ rules restricted their freedom in organizing or building their sleeping places. Several ideas to improve refugees’ living situation that volunteers voiced in meetings were dismissed quickly due to concerns that close-by living local Greeks could complain at the slightest sign of the setting up of any form of permanent-looking structure in the camps and that camp authorities or the municipality would have objections against such plans.

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<sup>12</sup> A few people had found old, stained mattresses, probably left on the streets in town, but most were sleeping on thin camping or straw mats bearing the UNHCR logo.

Apart from the symbolic significance, the tent structures were also the departure point of several major problems that were stated in the interviews. Not having doors to close meant to make it easy for thieves to steal people's few belongings, savings and documents – a very prominent problem, which was also constantly featured in casual conversations and determined refugees' lives to a high degree. Anyone travelling alone and at least one member of any family could be seen with small shoulder bags or bum bags at all times. Those bags carried their most important documents and money. Mhamid, for example, told me he was sleeping hugging this bag close to his body the whole night. I heard the story of a woman who was hiding her entire savings under her shirt between her breasts, and it was all stolen in her sleep.

Omar, who was living with his family and other Kurdish refugees that had arrived on the same boat with him in one of the more stable tents told me he was playing cards with the other men the whole night because they were sleeping in shifts to protect their belongings and family members. When I asked him how thieves would enter his relatively stable dwelling, which even had a door, he simply pointed to a slit in one of the walls of similar units nearby. I had seen the torn tarpaulin-walls before, but did not realize that all those cuts and openings were caused by thieves' knives. In his first week, I saw that Omar was wearing different shoes every day and asked him jokingly how many pairs of shoes he could fit into the small backpack the smuggler had allowed him to take onto the boat. He told me that he had forgotten his only pair of sneakers at the entrance of his tent once

and that they were stolen. So, now he was wearing his brothers' or friends' shoes whenever they did not need them.

In cases of disputes or violent outbreaks, tents also did not provide much protection, they could catch fire (which happened several times before and after I left), and the heat made it unbearable to stay in them during the day. It was obvious that the makeshift constructions out of torn tarpaulins, driftwood, and old clothes would provide virtually no protection against rain and cold once the weather would change. Privacy also played a role, as many did not even have a private tarpaulin-construction or camping tent, but were sleeping in big tents together with many people. Especially people travelling alone were often left with just a spot on the floor, not even managing to obtain material to build some kind of screen. This circumstance was additionally inconvenient considering cultural conventions according to which most Syrian women would never sleep in the same room with men not belonging to the circle of close relatives. Amany, being with her husband and three children, said in her interview (personal communication A.6, July 28, 2016):

*We are staying in a tent, and we cannot feel settled about anything. It's very hard for a woman to live in such a situation; dirt and garbage. The woman likes to live in a house, with a kitchen, and cook by herself, and she can do everything with her own hands, and can feed her children with her own hands, and keep her children clean. [...] Even our children are not listening to us; they are going to play. When the woman is in her house, it's a different situation. If she had a house, she could sit with her children, get along with them, teach them, and they listen to her. It's different than staying under a tent. [...] We always have to leave our hijab on. The situation is very, very bad here.*

Apart from living conditions in the camps, the second theme concerning direct challenges that refugees experienced was the state of waiting. In the following

section, I will show how the time period spent on Chios is connected to bad living conditions.

#### **4.3. The State of Waiting**

Vasillis, the municipality's site manager of Souda, made the connection between the perception that living conditions were insufficient and the period of time spent in the camps (personal communication B.8, August 02, 2016):

*In the past [...] the people accommodated here, the guests let's say, were very easy-going. In general, most of the population were just really tolerant to sleep on the floor; they were just fine with a blanket and heated shelter and a cup of soup. Now the same conditions they have to tolerate or sometimes suffer for weeks or months.*

When he said "in the past", he meant before March 20, 2016. Frances, too, put the perception of camp conditions' insufficiently into relation with the time spent in those camps (personal communication B.1, July 18, 2016):

*The conditions in the camps were bad, but it was only for a few days before people could move on. And now people are stuck and they are just waiting and hoping that, hoping to get papers that allow them to move on.*

Refugees' state of waiting was the most prevalent theme in volunteers' interviews (eleven of 13 mentioned it). Six of them connected this state to depression. Isabel, doctor and coordinator of the Spanish Basque NGO SMH (Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario), which provided first aid at boat landings and in the camps, said (personal communication B.5, July 28, 2016):

*So many of them [the refugees] came here really afraid in January, in December, but after some days, they were happy because they will continue their trips and their new lives will begin soon. And now [...] most part of the people is really tired, and really depressed, [...] the faces are faces of hopelessness. I think, one of the most important medical situations that they have is the mental disorders, like, the depression and the anxiety and all*

*these things that are because of the war and because of the situation that we are supporting here.*

Andy also shared a similar experience in his interview (personal communication B.1, July 18, 2016):

*There [before March 20] was also a huge sense of optimism, I think, from a lot of people. They would come ashore and they would hug you, and they would kiss the ground, and they would say a prayer. And you could share that optimism, because in two or three days time, they might be in Germany or Austria or Sweden. Whereas now, I think, it's really hard to find optimism. You see people, we see people, well, we saw it today: A man we first met when he arrived three months ago - and when we used to see him every day, he used to give you a big smile and would be pleased to see you. And now [...] he just looks sad. He's depressed. He has been broken.*

Andy's wife Frances added to this story, that "he just feels, he has no sense of when this could end." Four volunteers mentioned in the interviews that refugees were waiting for unclear periods of time. Indeed, in casual conversations with refugees, this was an issue that came up often, as they told of people who left the island or were interviewed already although they had arrived later than others. Omar and his family, for example, had their first interview appointment in Vial after three weeks, while others had already been waiting for months without anyone hearing their case and thus felt forgotten. The time period until they would receive the result of their application, were ordered for follow-up interviews, or were scheduled for their next interview in Athens seemed arbitrary for the camp residents and volunteers.



Three volunteer interviewees also linked the waiting to bureaucratic systems, implying that the Greek asylum system was slow or inefficient. Alex put it this way (personal communication B.6, July 29, 2016):

*Greece does not have an administration that runs very smoothly to say the least. I know there is up to 60, 000 people stuck in the Greek asylum system and we see how slow asylum systems in other European countries work that have much stronger means, and this will take years and years and years.*

Insufficiencies in Greece's system of asylum and assistance were also often connected to the financial crisis, as mentioned by three volunteers and four refugees. Chapter 6 will come back to Greece's role in refugees' situation on Chios.

Ten of the eleven refugees interviewed referred to the theme of waiting. While volunteers frequently mentioned depression, only one of the refugees did. Six of them also mentioned that they were not informed about what would happen next. Three perceived it as unnecessary to have them wait there and three said they were bored, not able to work, and just losing time. Mohamed for example, said (personal communication A.7, Aug. 02, 2016):

*We are staying here, we are burning the time [Arab saying for "to lose time"]. I imagined that I would bring my laptop and get many things done, programming and this stuff. I could make programs, I could use this time. I am out of Aleppo since one month, I am feeling as if I am going backwards, I am not studying anything. [...] I am feeling that I am dying slowly.*

Indeed, I heard references in casual conversations several times that resembled Mohamed's reference to "dying slowly" or what Omar said in his interview (personal communication A.1, July 20, 2016):

*Sometimes, our people say that if we died in one bomb, that's it. It [would] be better than to see so many things like this. Some people treat us like nothing.*

Another issue that occupied many refugees was money; both in casual conversations and interviews, where five of them mentioned it. The longer the period of waiting, the more money people lose; on the one hand through theft, on the other hand through the sum of small expenses. Amany gave the following example (personal communication A.6, July 28, 2016):

*The children, they need some pocket money, my daughter wants crisps, and she wants to buy them everyday, where can we bring her crisps from? There is no job, there is no financial assistance, there is nothing, there is only the food that they are bringing.*

Many carried all the money they could mobilize through savings, liquefying assets or borrowing. They had budgeted for their trip to the desired destination, but then had to realize that they were running out of money while waiting on the first stage of their journey, as Abu Mohammed said (personal communication A.4, July 23, 2016):

*Many people borrowed money to cross and come here. And they want to continue, but it is not possible. We are spending our money here; there is none left. The people are completely broke.*

This is especially tragic because they are very aware that for many of them the only way to reach Western Europe is with the help of smugglers, which is, in the face of increased border controls, quite expensive. Thus, reaching Europe is largely a question of financial means. Running out of money in Greece, for many, means to have zero savings left and therefore to either live in poverty in Greece or to turn around and live in poverty in another country without financial assistance, such as Turkey.

This section elaborated on the implications that long periods of waiting have for refugees' daily lives. Subsequently, I will add a layer by analysing this

circumstance through the lens of the anthropological understanding of liminal spaces.

#### **4.4. Waiting on Chios as a Liminal Space**

In order to gain deeper understanding of why refugees' waiting on Chios is of such significance to their lives, I will subsequently analyse it through the anthropological concept of liminal spaces. Turner (1994) and van Gennep (1960) developed their theory with reference to rites of passage, which transform societies' members from one to another state or status (see Chapter 2). However, they also provide a useful insight on the human and social dimensions of refugees stranded on Chios, which is otherwise frequently regarded a political topic.

##### **4.4.1. Application of van Gennep's Thought on Territorial Passage**

In Chapter 2, I have summarized van Gennep's (1960) writing on territorial passage from one region to another, which can be symbolically marked as transit from one world to another, frequently with neutral land in between. Refugees travelling from Syria to Europe also cross territorial boundaries and enter a different world as they expect Europe to be different from their home country<sup>13</sup>. Similar to van Gennep's neutral ground, the Aegean Sea can be considered to physically mark the boundary between those two worlds as refugee boats depart from the Turkish coast, cross the sea, and arrive on the Greek shore.

However, the actual frontier between the countries is narrowed down to a thin line, which runs invisibly somewhere halfway between the coasts. Especially

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<sup>13</sup> I will elaborate more on refugees' expectations of Europe in Chapter 6.

since the ETD took effect, intensified controls cause that this narrow line is more significant than the sea corridor as a whole. A couple in Souda told me how they had left Turkey with their children on March 19, which illustrates the importance of the border line: Because their boat's engine broke half way, they spent hours drifting on the waves, being washed from one side of the border to the other and back, until they were detected by authorities who determined that their boat was located in Greek waters at the time it was picked up.<sup>14</sup> Although the thin border line is significant in legal terms, one can extend the imagined corridor between the two worlds even beyond the Aegean Sea. That is the case because the overwhelming majority of refugees crossing the Aegean Sea do not wish to stay in Greece, but consider their destination to be farther north. Thus, in refugees' minds, crossing the sea and staying on Chios are just points on their journey from departure to desired destination (see Chapter 2 on BenEzer & Zetter, 2014). Therefore, all territories lying between Syria and the country of desired destination, sustain a liminal space between worlds in terms of physical territory.

Additionally, refugees seek to make the transition from people bare of protection of any state to people receiving protection as asylum status holders (see Chapter 2). Van Gennep (1960) writes that in some cases, huge guardian statues on portals push the threshold they are marking into the background as prayers and sacrifices are addressed to them, which transform spatial passage into a spiritual passage. When applying this to the refugees' situation, one can compare the guardian of those portals to the interviewers determining whether applicants will

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<sup>14</sup> To their misfortune, they were only taken in the early morning hours of March 20, which is why the family fell under the rule of the ETD and thus was still on Chios at the time that I talked to them.

be granted asylum or not. In other words, refugees who are still on their journey, that is, between departure and destination (see Chapter 2 on BenEzer & Zetter, 2014), are somewhat in a transitioning stage between worlds in terms of territory and status, without belonging to any of them. Van Gennep refers to this transitional stage as *waiting*, which is literally what refugees do on Chios since the ETD took effect. The next section covers Turner (1994), who focuses specifically on dynamics connected to this liminal space.

#### **4.4.2. Application of Turner's Thought on Liminal Personae**

Turner's (1994) characteristics of liminal personae (see Chapter 2) apply to the refugees on Chios as well. First, people in liminal spaces are structurally invisible, since they are not yet classified as part of the new state that they are about to enter. This can go as far that their individual names are replaced with a generic term. The second of those characteristics is that they have nothing, which reduces everyone in the same transitional state to a uniform condition. Dinah's interview quote illustrates how these two characteristics apply to refugees arriving on Chios (personal communication B.6, July 28, 2016):

*They step into a boat and they were maybe lawyers, up until now, they were teachers, they were social workers, they were butchers, they were bakers - they step out of that boat and they are just refugees.*

This lack of any property, status, or even individual names reminds of the notion of "bare humanity" (Malkki, 1996), "bare citizen" (Appadurai, 2013), "naked life" (Arendt, 1958) or "bare life" (Agamben, 1998) mentioned in Chapter 2. The third characteristic of liminal personae will be connected to refugees in Chapter 5.

In the context of liminality, the key characteristic of refugees on Chios is that they are still on their journey (see Chapter 2) and therefore reside in this liminal space between exit of one world and entrance to another. The term frequently used to refer to a person who has not entered a territory through legally appropriate means is *irregular migrant*. All refugees on Chios have entered Europe on this way. Confirming their liminal state, *irregular* can also be considered to denote their condition outside of *regulated*, established systems. Douglas (1966) showed that outliers to systems bring about insecurity (see Chapter 2). Liminal spaces are characterized by ambiguity, which is a threat to people's safety as it puts basic structures of their lives into question. Refugees who attempt to reach Europe know that it will be a risky journey holding much uncertainty. Accordingly, they seek to cross this space as quickly as possible in order to be able to resume their lives, or start a new life, as soon as their arrival at their destination allows them to slip back into the system, gain a legal status and again find their spot within the social system. However, the ETD effectively stops their journey of physically crossing territory and instead keeps them in this uncertain space (see Chapter 5). Chios is not their final destination, yet it is where they have to stay for indefinite periods of time.

Thus, if refugees' state of waiting on Chios is considered through the lens of van Gennep and Turner, the ETD locks people in a liminal space. The ambiguity that comes with a condition outside of any structure, leads to great pressure on the individual. That this waiting period is perceived to be indefinite makes the circumstance only worse. In this light, it is comprehensible that a constant state of

insecurity can drive refugees into depression. The following section will turn to challenges that volunteers face on Chios.

#### **4.5. Other Challenges Volunteers Encountered in their Daily Routines**

There are some challenges that volunteers faced in their daily routines that are not directly connected to the interviews' themes but had significant consequences for their work. This is an important addition to this chapter, because these issues illustrate the dynamics between different actors involved in the response to refugees on Chios.

##### **4.5.1. Changing Circumstances and Emotional Strain**

The first challenge refers to the fact that the situation was subject to constant change, which required flexibility in appropriate responses. The ETD had the most far-reaching consequences in terms of the dynamics of refugee flows and needs, which will be examined more closely in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, even during the three weeks I spent on Chios, operations were constantly adjusted to changing needs as we received requests or feedback from refugees, as volunteers brought new ideas or as political situations changed. One drastic event, for instance, was the attempted coup d'état in Turkey on July 15, 2016. It stoked fears of more arrivals as a result of increased insecurities and violence in Turkey. In general, there was a constant worry that the numbers of boats could rise again, especially among volunteers who had worked on Chios before March 20 and had experienced the huge numbers of arrivals. Andy said (personal communication B.1, July 18, 2016):

*The boats are not coming so often, but because of the political situation, there is always a fear, I guess, that they will start all over again. So, although we are doing lots of other activities, we also keep planning, so that, if all of a sudden the boats start coming back, then we know which activities we just have to stop doing, so we can really focus on the boats.*

Even short-term increases in boat arrivals or changes in patterns of arrival (for instance that a few boats arrived earlier at night than expected or landed at different points on the island than usual) instantly triggered adjusted nightshifts, patrolling routes, and emergency supply stocking (see Chapter 3).

The second challenge that was omnipresent among volunteers related to emotional effects. In the interviews, three people who had returned to Chios mentioned that their first stay on the island had had an effect on them, partly inducing drastic life changes. Ariane told me (personal communication B.2, July 20, 2016), “When I came back [to Switzerland] the first time, I also beg[a]n to do things in my country for poor people, or people living in the streets.” Frances described how their first visit made an impression on her and her husband Andy (personal communication B.1, July 18, 2016):

*We went home and it really affected us. So, we decided we'd like to come back. We couldn't think how we could afford to do that, so we've, hem, we emptied out our house and we have rented it out for two or three years. So, we've managed to come back in April. So, we have been here for three months.*

However, even while on the island, the situation in general and refugees' stories were a strain on volunteers' emotions. In the interviews, three people reported this. They used expressions like “it is breaking your heart” (Andy, personal communication B.1, July 18, 2016) or “it is hard to see” (Isabel, personal communication B.5, July 28, 2016).



#### **4.5.2. Confrontations with Refugees, Organizations, and Authorities**

Aside from inner struggles, volunteers also faced conflicts with refugees, other organizations, and authorities. Frustration in the contact with refugees often arose from their refusal to accept particular rules imposed by the volunteers to guarantee a certain degree of fairness. In clothes distributions, for instance, every person was usually only allowed to take one or two items so as to assure that the ones coming on the third day would still receive a piece. However, there were always a few people who used all kinds of tricks to obtain more items than they should have received. If their attempts were uncovered, lengthy discussions followed; if they were not detected, other refugees complained angrily. In several conversations, volunteers voiced their frustration about feeling mean as their attempts to help frequently caused fighting, arguing and bad moods. Mohammed and I attended the distributions regularly until the last week, when we could not bear the rants anymore. In the beginning, Mohammed was happy that his Arabic and English skills were valuable to both volunteers and refugees, because issues could finally be explained in both directions. Nevertheless, he always left distributions in a bad mood, because he was constantly begged for favours, yelled at, and insulted. "You are so lucky that you can't understand everything they are saying, it's so bad," he told volunteers several times.

All CESRT volunteers received a little card at their arrival with a text printed in English, Arabic and Farsi, which explained that they were independent volunteers, doing their best to help, but not having the means or power to do everything. Volunteers who had handed the card over to very outraged refugees told me it was very effective in deescalating situations as people calmed down

and even apologized for their behaviour. Many refugees were frustrated and desperate, and the people responsible for their grievances did not walk through the camp and were therefore not approachable. This connects to the perceived communication gap between people on the island and Europe, which I mentioned in Chapter 3 and will come back to in chapter 6. Volunteers were then often the targets of their anger.

Conflicts with other organizations were also occupying CESRT members, although the group put huge emphasis on close collaboration, which also worked with most other groups. The most contentious issue at the time I was on Chios was the Norwegian NGO A Drop in the Ocean that was perceived as not being collaborative and undermining agreed-on arrangements. The activities of CESRT and the Drops (as volunteers commonly referred to the NGO) were similar, which could lead to clashes if there was a lack of communication. I had the impression that CESRT members really tried hard to bundle efforts in order to achieve a higher impact together with the Drops, but that seemed easier said than done.

Conflicts with authorities of police, Frontex, or Vial camp were very present in CESRT volunteers' daily routines as well. Frequently, extended periods of time in the morning meetings were spent on discussing problems with authorities that had occurred during the previous day or night. In general, they were perceived as hindering the volunteers' efforts to help people. I already touched on CESRT's mission to provide water, food and clothes to new arrivals. This only occupied the group that much, because it was commonly connected to a race against the police who regularly prohibited it. Many volunteers came back from night shifts in

which boats had arrived and were devastated, because they had spent hours trying to reach water bottles to waiting refugees who were just a few meters away from them, asking the volunteers for water, but a row of police between them did not allow it. Once refugees were at the registration centre in Vial, it was impossible to reach them, so CESRT volunteers always hoped to detect boats before Frontex or coast guards did, so that they accessed them before the police arrived. If the other patrols were faster, refugees were usually brought into Chora's port, where volunteers were dependent on port police to determine whether they were allowed to hand out supplies or not.

Again, CESRT put much effort into ensuring collaboration; there were meetings with all major actors operating at the shore aimed at bridging suspicion, being responsive to demands, and setting up plans for division of tasks, but it rarely worked out harmonically. Some CESRT volunteers told me that police were following them while they patrolled the coast at night. They suspected that the police were mistrusting them and thought they had contact to smugglers and therefore knew where boats would arrive. It happened that volunteers were arrested and interrogated when they were at the port. Thus, while I was there, CESRT introduced a registration system of all volunteers accessible to authorities in order to gain their trust. However, if I follow the news of volunteers who are on Chios to the date of writing four months later, they seem to face the same struggles as before; On November 20, Andy whom I had also interviewed in July posted the following on Facebook:

*There have been six boats arrived on Chios in the past two days. Three were not reported to us or the medical team. For one we were given the wrong time of arrival, but were able to attend because we have now understood*

*that there is a desire to keep us away from new arrivals so were expecting false information. One we were informed so late that we could only just arrive in time. One we attended in the far south of the island and had time to offer proper medical and humanitarian support. Of the six boats there was a deliberate intent to deceive in five instances. A deliberate attempt to avoid medical assessment being available. Denial of food and water to people at risk. No opportunity to offer dry clothes to cold and wet refugees.*

These challenges that volunteers faced on Chios illustrate the multitude of actors involved the mismatch of needs perceived by these actors and the unclear allocation of responsibilities, which Chapter 6 will elaborate on in more detail.

In order to illustrate the situation on Chios, I elaborated on two of the six themes extracted from the formal interviews. Complaints about bad living conditions in the camps were prevalent among both, volunteers and refugees. I showed that the perception of the camps as insufficient was linked to the period spent on Chios. From an anthropological perspective, the state of waiting locks refugees in a liminal space, which causes insecurity and, as volunteers observed, depression. Challenges faced by volunteers expose the lack of uniform response to the issues on the island. This chapter gave an overview of the humanitarian situation on Chios. The next chapter will show that the most pressing challenges that refugees encountered on Chios are a consequence of the ETD, which was born out of and reinforces a European crisis.

## **5. The EU-Turkey Deal as Security-Informed Response to a Crisis**

Chapter 4 described challenges in refugees' living situation and volunteers' work on Chios. This chapter traces these manifest, visible and experienced issues back to underlying causes in political and social structures. The chapter furthers the research's overarching argument as it uncovers the refugees' humanitarian situation on Chios to be a consequence of the EU-Turkey Deal (ETD). In order to do so, I first describe events leading up to the deal's conclusion. Afterwards I elaborate on the deal itself including how refugees and volunteers on Chios referred to the ETD, which is one of the six themes identified from the interviews. Subsequently, I make a connection with another of the six themes, namely the dichotomy between refugees as normal versus bad people. In the last part, I analyse the European response to the high influx of refugees through the lens of the international relations theories of realism and liberalism, and Mary Douglas' anthropological concept of matter out of place. In this context, I highlight the significance of security concerns and the quest to restore order.

### **5.1. The Escalation to a Crisis**

#### **5.1.1. March 20 as the Turning Point According to Interviews**

*We came here to the island of Chios. It meant to be passed quickly and we should have left from here to Athens and from Athens to Europe, but we got surprised by the deal between Turkey and the EU, this deal that decreased the influx of refugees. The government wanted to limit it and they gathered us in those terrible camps. (Abu Mohammed, personal communication A.4, July 23, 2016)*

Five of the eleven interviewed refugees mentioned the ETD out of their own initiative. Additionally, eight of the 13 interviewed volunteers referred to the deal.

Seven of those constructed it as a turning point in the situation on the island and four described it as failed. In casual conversations the deal and particularly the date it took effect, March 20, 2016, featured frequently, mostly with a negative connotation, suggesting that the deal must indeed have had tremendous influence on people's lives. As described in Chapter 4, the main issue for refugees on Chios are bad camp conditions, which are linked to long waiting periods. I already touched on the connection between waiting and the ETD in the previous chapter; for instance in the interview quotes of Vasillis, Frances, Isabel and Andy who all compared the refugees' state of waiting to before March 20. This date marks the turning point in the EU's response to refugees as the ETD's implementation apparently resulted in the creation of significant problems for refugees on Chios. Thus, in order to fully grasp its implementation, it is important to understand the deal's function and the political processes that led to its conclusion.

### **5.1.2. Increasing Numbers of Refugees enter the European Union**

Volunteers who had been on Chios earlier all talked of huge numbers of boats arriving on the island's shore and people moving on quickly. Indeed, in the first two months of 2016, around 124,500 refugees had arrived to Greece via the Mediterranean Sea (UNHCR, 2016a). In January and February of 2015, the UNHCR only counted about 4500 refugees. 2015 saw a steep increase in arrivals to Greece with the highest peak in October (211,700) and a total of around 856,700 (UNHCR, 2016a). In comparison, there were only 43,500 in 2014, which was already a 280 per cent increase compared to 2013 (UNHCR, 2014). The notion of a migrant or refugee crisis emerged in the years 2013 and 2014, but it was definitely on the political agenda of priorities in 2015, when numbers increased

dramatically (Veebel & Markus, 2015) and therewith made it the “world’s largest and perhaps most daunting refugee crisis since World War II” (Kerwin, 2016; also see European Commission, 2015; Veebel & Markus, 2015). In total, EU member states received 1,321,600 asylum claims in 2015, which made it a key year in forming European response to refugees (Mouzourakis, 2016; Greenhill, 2016).

Since 2010, following an increase of arrivals from Iraq and Afghanistan, Greece had introduced tighter border control at its land borders with Turkey, which included support through the EU border control force Frontex<sup>15</sup> (2016). This move led to a shift in crossings from land to sea, which resulted in intensified responses on the shore as well. When the Arab Spring ignited the Syrian Revolution in 2011, it quickly resulted in violent escalation (BBC, 2013). Thus, Greece became a natural entrance point to the EU for Syrian refugees due to its geographical proximity to the conflict and led to a steep increase in refugee arrivals to Greece after 2011. The nationalities of arrivals reflect this dynamic as the composition of arriving nationalities changed after 2012, with Syrians making up 60 per cent of arrivals in 2014 (UNHCR, 2014).

### **5.1.3. A Weak Refugee Regime Gets Holes**

An additional factor that boosts the advantage of entering the EU via Greece for refugees is the suspension of the Dublin Regulation for this country.<sup>16</sup> When

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<sup>15</sup> Frontex is the European agency for the management of operational cooperation at the external borders of the member states of the European Union.

<sup>16</sup> I came to this conclusion through conversations I had with refugees about considerations according to which refugees move through Europe and the Dublin agreement is a major factor.

internal borders for most EU member states were removed to build the so-called Schengen zone in the 1990s, the Dublin Convention was negotiated, which essentially assigns responsibility for refugees' asylum claims to the first EU country of entrance. In 2003, Dublin II upgraded it and was accompanied by the EURODAC Regulation, which provided a database for fingerprints taken from asylum seekers in this first country. Following criticism of Dublin II, Dublin III took effect in January 2014, which assigned responsibility to transferring member states to ensure that applicants' rights are not violated in the country that holds the transferred person's fingerprint if they are supposed to be sent back to this country (Fratzke, 2015). However, already since January 2011, most European countries have refrained from sending refugees back to Greece, because the European Court of Human Rights had ruled on an individual case that Belgium could not deport a refugee back to Greece since he would face human rights violations there (ECRE, 2016; *MSS v Belgium and Greece*, 2011; Papademetriou, 2011). Cabot (2014) conducted research in an Athens-based organization on the Greek asylum system (see Chapter 2) and concluded in 2013 that it exhibited severe shortcomings. She even already talked of a refugee crisis on the doorstep of Europe – as description that fits even better now. The Dublin Regulation is not only the horror of any refugee (Grant & Domokos, 2011), but has also been criticized for producing an unfair system in which especially southern border member states have to carry the major burden, while landlocked and northern EU countries can conveniently refrain from taking responsibility for asylum seekers (Fratzke, 2015).



The increasing influx of refugees started to uncover and highlight insufficiencies in further country's asylum systems. For example, the UNHCR called for member states to suspend transfers to Bulgaria in 2014 ("Dublin Hungary", n.d.). Germany, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, UK, Italy, and Slovakia have officially refrained from sending people back to Hungary since the first half of 2016 (Mouzourakis, 2016). Since most refugees have in mind certain European countries located farther north as their final destinations, the fact that they would not be sent back even if they were detected and registered in Greece, increased their chance of applying for asylum in their desired destination. Apart from conversations with refugees, this dynamic is confirmed by the UNHCR report (2014), which also supposes that most arrivals did not attempt to seek asylum in Greece. The preceding elaboration served to illustrate how the refugee regime in place in the EU already showed weaknesses before the situation escalated to a crisis in 2015.

#### **5.1.4. The Escalation in late 2015**

The dynamic of increasing numbers of refugees migrating northwards received an additional boost when the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) tweeted on August 25 that Germany suspended the Dublin Regulation for Syrian refugees (BAMF, 2015). This was the beginning of Chancellor Angela Merkel's mantra of "Wir schaffen das" (*We can do it*), which would be celebrated by refugees and pro-refugee supporters. At the same time, she was highly criticised for her open invitation and blamed for the increasingly uncontrollable situation of refugees travelling through the EU (see for instance Calderwood, 2016; Huggler, 2015). The momentous tweet unleashed a mass migration of

refugees towards Germany, leading Hungary, which had already announced but again withdrawn the suspension of the Dublin Regulation in June 2015 (ECRE, 2015a) to ultimately entirely giving up on stopping and processing the refugees. Instead, they allowed thousands to board trains heading to the Austrian border on August 31. Although afterwards Hungarian authorities entirely suspended their transportation services for several days for security reasons, the incident encouraged refugees to march in big numbers towards Austria and Germany, breaking through police lines on train stations and through fences on the Serbian-Hungarian border (Al Jazeera, 2015). Once the masses were moving, authorities resorted to facilitating the movement rather than trying to stop it; On September 4, Hungarian Prime minister's chief of staff offered to transport refugees by bus to Austria. On September 5 alone, 11,000 arrived to Germany (BBC, 2015a).

This time window was the highpoint of the refugee crisis since it led to the temporary suspension of the asylum system as it was usually practiced. Although the development were closely linked to political decisions, it was brought about by individual people, refugees and Europeans. In the end of August, European civil society stepped up and took initiative ranging from welcoming refugees at train stations in Munich to forming a convoy of 140 private cars leaving from Vienna on September 6 to pick up refugees in Budapest without being stopped or persecuted by police (BBC, 2015a; Connolly, 2015), and the setup of a multitude of grass roots volunteer organizations all across Europe. Chapter 2 described social constructivism, a perspective on international politics that highlights the role of ideational factors and non-state actors. That individuals - refugees and Europeans - could temporarily overturn state authorities' rule does not fit realist

or liberalist theories, but confirms notions of social constructivism (see Chapter 2).

However, member states' citizens' involvement was not only motivated by pro-refugee sentiments. The welcoming atmosphere quickly changed as voices of fear became louder and the anti-immigration section of civil society rose. By mid-September, Hungary had erected a 175 kilometre long fence as physical barrier along its southern borders (BBC, 2015b; ECRE, 2015b). Throughout Europe, right-wing groups and parties formed and gained growing support (Greenhill, 2016) and Europe's national governments increasingly mired in disagreement and assignment of guilt rather than engaging in constructive solution finding. Two events that led to outbreaks of a moral panic (see Chohen, 2002; Morgan & Poynting, 2012) pushed the remaining euphoria about the refugee welcoming culture over the edge. The first one was ignited through bomb attacks in Paris on November 13 that were attributed to the Islamic State and where one of the attackers was believed to have entered France by posing as a Syrian refugee (Gabiam, 2016). The second moral panic started with mass sexual assaults during New Year's celebrations in the German city of Cologne that predominantly Arab Muslim immigrants were blamed for (Spiegel Online, 2016). By the end of 2015, six EU members that are also part of the Schengen Zone, had reintroduced border controls under the "exceptional circumstances" provision of the Schengen Convention (Greenhill, 2016). In February 2016, Angela Merkel said in an opening speech at the Munich Security Conference, "The historic mission of Europe for the past 70 years, to be a symbol of freedom and values, threatens to be drowned out by xenophobia and nationalism" (The Local, 2016).

In response to these developments, the EU took drastic measures in early 2016; As a follow-up on meetings between Turkey and the EU in November 2015, they concluded an agreement on March 18, 2016 to close the tap, which had spilled floods of refugees (to use a common description in the media) into Europe. What became known as the ETD, took effect in the night of March 20 and quickly silenced the refugee crisis as fewer and fewer refugees arrived on the shores of Greece, and even fewer made it to Western Europe as borders were sealed. However, as the situation on Chios shows (see Chapter 4), the deal only dammed the stream, and failed to instal sufficient or long-term measures to deal with the refugees who continued to trickle through the makeshift political construction.

This section showed how an increasing influx of refugees led to the uncovering of weaknesses in EU policies that were in place to assure a regulated response to incoming refugees. Although the situation became labelled as refugee crisis, it was the combination of a weak refugee regime and member states' unilateral responses that created the crisis. Thus, the refugees can be seen as a catalyst for a latent crisis of the European refugee regime. The next section will elaborate on the ETD in more detail and show that it was a quick and highly controversial fix to the symptoms, rather than a sustainable solution to the underlying issues.

## **5.2. The EU-Turkey Deal**

Given the concerns about the situation in late 2015, European leaders knew of the urgent need to intervene politically. This section will demonstrate how they came to the conclusion of the ETD and what it entailed. When asked to summarize what

the ETD was about, Alex responded in his interview (personal communication B.6 July 29, 2016):

*When Europe didn't manage, or the European Union we should say, didn't manage to distribute in any fair way the number of refugees that were coming, they instead decided to strike a deal with President Erdogan in Turkey, which basically says, refugees are sent back from Greece into Turkey, and then Europe will take some refugees out of Turkey straight into Europe and then give money and other benefits to Turkey. So, the official way it was put, was 'We want to fight the smugglers and we want to take away the dangerous crossings across the sea,' when in fact, it just contains the refugee problem in Turkey and in Greece, because nobody can move on anymore.*

Mustafa introduced the circumstances under which the deal was concluded as well (personal communication A.6, July 28, 2016):

*Europe doesn't like Turkey at all and didn't accept it in the EU. Is it possible that in a matter of six months, or some months, the whole of Europe with all its presidents, makes deals with Turkey? And classified Turkey as a safe country for refugees? And Turkey is the country of coups, the country of non-democracy, the country of non-freedom; it's known, the war with the Kurds. Is it possible that in six months - let's say it in a better way - because of their own agendas, they stopped dealing with humanity, they stopped dealing with values?*

Both quotes illustrate volunteers' and refugees' generally negative stance towards the deal. Subsequently, I will elaborate more on the ETD from the macro level of analysis rather than the emic perspective.

### **5.2.1 Meetings Leading up to the EU-Turkey Deal**

The conclusion of what became known as the ETD had its prelude during the highest influx of refugees in October 2015. On October 15, the European Council met in Brussels and primarily discussed the topic of migration, particularly stressing "cooperation with third countries to stem the flows" (European Council, 2015a, p. 1), already mentioning "strengthening the protection of the EU's external borders" and a "joint Action Plan with Turkey" in this context. On

November 29, 2015, a meeting between the heads of the EU and their Turkish counterpart took place in Brussels leading to a concluding statement, which smoothed the way for collaboration through a multitude of concessions to Turkey (European Council, 2015b). These included reenergizing the accession process with regard to Turkey's candidature for EU membership, backing in the fight against terrorism (it is not further specified where and what kind of terrorists), the lifting of visa requirements for Turkish citizens, enhancement of economic relations, cooperation in the energy sector, and an upgrade of the Customs Union (European Council, 2015b).

Of the eleven points stated in the document, only points six and seven referred to refugees. In these, the EU highlights the "importance of burden-sharing within the framework of Turkey-EU cooperation", covenants financial and humanitarian support for Turkey, and states that "the EU and Turkey agreed to implement the Joint Action Plan, which would bring order into migratory flows and help to stem irregular migration." The latter included preventing travel to Turkey and the EU, swift returns of migrants who were not found to be in need of international protection, improvement of Syrians' socio-economic situation in Turkey, and enhancing "the fight against criminal smuggling networks" (European Council, 2015b).

On March 18, 2016, the European Council met with their Turkish counterpart in a "third meeting since November 2015 dedicated to deepening Turkey-EU relations as well as addressing the migration crisis" (General Secretariat of the Council, 2016, p. 1). It had been preceded by threats from Turkey that they could open

their doors to Greece and Bulgaria anytime and let even more refugees migrate into Europe, which left the EU with their back to the wall (Greenhill, 2016). After reviewing the progress made in the implementation of the agreements reached in November, the statement goes on to state nine additional action points so as to “end the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU in order to “break the business model of the smugglers and to offer migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk“(General Secretariat of the Council, 2016).

### **5.2.2. The Deal's Nine Action Points**

The first four action points describe how the ETD seeks to stop the refugee flow from Turkey (General Secretariat of the Council, 2016): 1) Irregular migrants arriving on Greek islands as from March 20 will be registered, asylum applications processed individually by Greek authorities in cooperation with the UNHCR, and returned to Turkey in accordance with EU and international law if not found eligible for asylum. The costs of the returns will be covered by the EU. 2) For every returned Syrian, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the EU whereby priority will be given to vulnerable cases and people who have not previously attempted to enter the EU illegally. EU member states had committed to providing places for resettlement in July 2015, of which 18,000 remained and which could be increased to a maximum of 72,000. Should returns exceed this number or should irregular migration not be ended, the mechanism will be discontinued. 3) Turkey will prevent new routes to the EU from opening. 4) Once crossings have been substantially and sustainably reduced, a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme will be activated to which EU member states contribute on a voluntary basis.

Points five to nine are based on the agreements from November (European Council, 2015b) and describe what Turkey receives in return from the EU, namely lifted visa requirements for Turkish citizens, an instant 3 billion euro for refugee facilities in Turkey and an additional 3 billion up to the end of 2018, upgrading of the Customs Union, re-energising of the accession process, and collaboration in improving the humanitarian conditions in certain Syrian regions near the Turkish border within Syria. Although through investigation exceeds the scope of this research, I want to call attention to the fact that Turkey launched a military attack on Syrian Kurdish and Islamic State-held territories close to its borders in the end of August 2016 and asked for international backing. Officially, Turkey cleared the armed rebel groups from its border regions to establish a safe zone for Syrian refugees within Syrian territory (Coskun & Gurses, 2016).

### **5.2.3. Critique of the EU-Turkey Deal**

The deal has faced much critique as it was questioned if it violates international law and human rights, but also because it reduces the EU to a plaything of Turkey as they cannot afford to voice too much critique about any of Turkey's actions (Greenhill, 2016; Hurwitz, 2009). This became increasingly questionable as the year 2016 proceeded and saw mass political arrests, increased censoring of media, and violent action against Kurds and refugees (see for instance Human Rights Watch, 2016; Letsch, 2016; Shaheen, 2016). It was also criticised for constituting a panic-driven rather than deliberate decision and undermining the EU's values (The Spectator, quoted in Greenhill 2016, p. 328).



Furthermore, it forced the EU to recognize Turkey as a safe country, a nuisance to many, which was also reflected in the interviews conducted on Chios. Mustafa, for instance, referred to the coup d'état, which was attempted on July 15, 2016 in Turkey. Due to the coup's recency at the time of recording the interviews, three refugee interviewees and three volunteers used it as an example to illustrate that Turkey was not a safe country (personal communication A.6, July 28, 2016):

*We came to Europe, we sought for protection, but no! They say, 'No! Turkey is now the safest country for you!' No, Turkey is not safe for me! Not safe for me and my children, but the governments want to tell you that Turkey is safe for me. [...] For example, 15 days ago, there was a coup. Within some hours, there was a coup. And I am watching news since 20 years, and I didn't see that a coup happened in Europe on democratic governments that are elected democratically. There is some demonstrations against, maybe the president, maybe to discard a minister, is it possible that the German army is going to prepare a coup on Angela Merkel? I didn't hear it since 30 or 40 years, and not in any country in Europe. And we came because of that. Is it possible to go to Turkey and it is classified as a safe country and 15 days ago a coup happened?*

Apart from the coup, especially Turkish treatment of Kurds featured high as proof for the lack of safety within Turkey. Three refugees and three volunteers referred to it; for instance Andy (personal communication B.1, July 18, 2016):

*The deal was signed, that people who came to Greece would be potentially sent back to Turkey and asked to claim asylum from Turkey, because it was deemed to be a safe country. Turkey this week has had a military coup, which failed. We have met people who came from boats – [...] Kurdish people who have been imprisoned in Turkey because they were Kurdish. [...] Their crime was they were Kurdish. They were born as Kurds, so they were kept in prison. So, we said to them, 'I am sorry, you will need to, you will first of all go to Vial, which is a detention centre.' And they replied, 'We don't mind, we have just been in a Turkish prison simply for being Kurds.' Europe, the European Parliaments consider that as acceptable and safe. And the Secretary of State for America came here and described Turkey as being a great example for how a country should treat refugees.*

Mahmoud is Kurdish and told in his interview that his claim for asylum was rejected (personal communication A.5, July 28, 2016):

*I translated the decision, the rejection. They said that I am imagining that there is a threat to my life, and they said it is a general fear, there is no personal fear. But now, if I would go to Turkey, it's known that I am Kurdish and all Kurds, especially the Kurds of Syria, are threatened by the Turkish government and the Turkish people say that we are terrorists and we are with the PKK.*

Abu Mohammed is not Kurdish. Nevertheless, his experience confirms the accusation of arbitrary arrests and even killings in Turkey (personal communication A.4, July 23, 2016):

*As soon as you are here, either you get asylum in Greece or they send you back to Turkey. I got harmed in Turkey. They put me into jail for 23 days in Turkey. My country was in war and they made me sign deportation papers to go back to Syria. So much about Turks. And they were dealing with me in the worst ways. [...] Turkey is not a safe country. Not a safe country. Everyday explosions. And a military coup happened in Turkey. [...] It built a wall on the Syrian-Turkish borders. And this wall is to stop the flood of refugees to Turkey. And Turkey pretends that it is allowing refugees in every day, but what they are saying is a lie. You get in; they shoot you. There have been people shot in front of me and they were buried in Khorbet al-Jous [place on the border]. They got shot. The Turks killed them. [...] You go to Turkey, the Turks arrest you and take photos of you [to prove] that they are letting refugees in. And they send you back and hand you over to Ahrar al-Sham and to Jabhat al-Nusra, which are classified as terrorists.*

Two refugees stated in the interviews that they only decided to come to Europe when they were already in Turkey, because the conditions were bad there. Four mentioned that they felt like they were only given the choice between Greece and Turkey, which were both not an option for them. In this context, they referred to attending officially organized information sessions about Greek asylum, which was considered entirely insufficient. Nevertheless, several ones also stated they were considering going back to Turkey or Syria, because the situation there

would be better than being humiliated and doomed to waiting in Greece.

However, I think most of them indeed only see that as a very last resort and just voiced their frustration about the situation in this form.

At the date of writing, about 21,400 refugees have arrived to Greece by sea since April 2016 (UNHCR, 2016a). Compared to 151,500 arrivals in the first three months of the year, this is a steep decrease. Nevertheless, there are still people arriving and according to the latest UNHCR data, there are 62,600 people of concern<sup>17</sup> in Greece. Although numbers of refugees arriving and travelling through to the EU have significantly decreased after the ETD has taken effect, it has not solved, but merely shifted the crisis. Refugees are still attempting and often succeeding to enter European territory and to make their way to their desired destinations. The significant difference between pre and post ETD from a European point of view is that the crisis is less visible since there are fewer arrivals and those are to a great part contained in Greece, on the periphery of the EU; out of sight is out of mind. In an attempt to shine light on the EU's response to the refugee crisis, I will analyse the previously mentioned events with the help of theory from international relations and anthropology, which condense the issue to striving for security and order. However, I first devote some attention to refugees' and volunteers' views on closing borders.

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<sup>17</sup> According to UNHCR (2013) the "UNHCR's population of concern is composed of various groups of people including refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) protected/assisted by UNHCR, stateless persons and returnees (returned refugees and IDPs)."

### **5.3. Good and Bad People, Genuine and False Refugees**

The last sections elaborated on the circumstances under which the ETD was concluded and the measures it induced. The next sections will analyse the European response to the refugee influx from a macro scale perspective, that is, looking at why it made sense to conclude the ETD for the EU and its member states. This section shines light on the same issue from the viewpoint of individuals on Chios. It does so by elaborating on one of the six interview themes, the notion of Chios' refugees as genuine and normal or good people, which also recurred in casual conversations in context with the ETD.

#### **5.3.1. Refugees' Opinion on Bad People and Closed Borders**

I had expected refugees to have entirely negative attitudes towards the EU's policy of closing their borders and preventing people from reaching their desired destinations. Instead, although refugees were frustrated with their situation, they frequently told me they could understand Europe's response. They even said, they preferred Europe closing its borders to having it threatened or destroyed by bad people who come "on the shoulders of the Syrian people", as Abu Mohammed put it (personal communication A.4, July 23, 2016). Seven of the eleven refugees talked about bad people in the interviews and four stated that Europe is doing good in not letting them in. Therefore, they found it reasonable that borders were closed, although it prevented themselves from continuing their journeys. They told me, they rather waited for months in camps, if this ultimately meant that genuine refugees would be filtered out from the mass of arrivals (see Chapter 2), bad people would be sent back to wherever they came from, and Europe and the reputation of the Syrian people would not be spoiled by bad people's actions.

They seemed to trust Europe in that it would ultimately recognize them as good people, that is, genuine refugees and open its doors to them. Mhamid, for instance, said (personal communication A.3, July 21, 2016):

*I think, the Europe governments, it's [good] to close the way. Because so many people here [are] so bad people. Not all of [them]! But, they should not let anyone complete [their] way. That's what I think. Because so maybe people here [are] so bad and so many [bad] people [are] already in Europe. They should open the way, but not for all people.*

### **5.3.2. Fake Refugees and the Role of Nationality and Accent**

When talking of the dynamic described above, nationality seemed to play a significant role for Syrian refugees, illustrated by the following quote of Abu Mohammed said (personal communication A.4, July 23, 2016):

*We wish from the EU, that they make it easier for us and that they open the way for us to go to Europe, because we, the Syrian people, we are a civilized people. And the other nationalities, they sat on our shoulders and they entered Europe. And you can see, all the problems that are happening are from other nationalities, not from Syrians. The Afghans are making problems. The Algerians are stealing wherever they go. The Moroccan is doing the same. The Tunisian, the Egyptian, the Pakistani - why are they all coming on the shoulders of the Syrian people and the Palestinian people who are without a country<sup>18</sup>? So, we wish from Europe that they will revisit this and that they will allow the Syrians and the Palestinians to enter Europe because we have been treated unjustly in our country because of the war. [...] And you have the minors here, they are taking so much care of them<sup>19</sup>, but the minors of Syrian nationality that are here are bad. They steal. They rob. They are breaking into shops. They rob each other. They rob the families. [...] This is my advice for all European countries, that they don't host the minor refugees and that they send them back to Turkey. This is my advice. And the Algerians are disfiguring the image of all Arabs and all refugees. Everyday stealing.*

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<sup>18</sup> He refers to descendants of Palestinian refugees who had fled to Syria after the establishment of Israel.

<sup>19</sup> He refers to unaccompanied refugees under the age of 18, which enjoy special protection.

Although several refugee interviewees conceded that there were also certain Syrians who belonged to those bad people, determining genuineness was very much connected to differences in nationalities. Only two mentioned in the interviews that asylum applicants pretend to be Syrian, but this was an issue that came up very frequently in casual conversations and that had a major influence on the social dynamics in the camps. In my experience, Syrians could detect their own dialect in a matter of a few spoken words. Refugees who were claiming to be Syrian but were actually from a different Arab-speaking country had a hard time to convey their story in a believable way to Syrians, because even if they tried, they had a hard time in changing their accent.

I witnessed several times how Mohammed overheard only a few words of a passing refugee talking on his phone and then told me the person's nationality. One time, we were called to the hospital to translate for members of SMH who had brought two new arrivals to the emergency room. One of the men had received strong painkillers and lay deliriously on a bench in the waiting room. SMH had told us both patients had identified themselves as Syrian, but when Mohammed asked the man what had happened to his leg, he could simply not understand his answer. In his muzzy state, the man had replied in his dialect, which Mohammed identified as either Algerian or Moroccan. Once the man realized that Mohammed did not understand him, he tried to speak in formal Arabic. The two men seemed to know each other and when Mohammed asked the other one where he was from, and he replied, "Syria", Mohammed laughed and said, "I am from Syria. And you for sure are not." Thereupon, the man just responded with a shrug of his shoulders.

To give one last example, two CESRT volunteers from the French-speaking part of Switzerland told me they were at a boat landing and overheard two refugees speaking in French. They directly recognized the Algerian accent and started speaking to them, but the men quickly switched to Arabic and claimed they were Syrian. A few days later, they crossed the same volunteers' path in Souda and started a conversation. After the volunteers had explained to them that they were not in any way affiliated to the UNHCR or other authorities that decided upon asylum applications, the men laughed and said, in that case they could also speak French and stop pretending they were Syrian. This anecdote illustrates the point made earlier in Chapter 3, when I defended my methodological approach of hanging out with refugees to gain their trust rather than conducting research that requires backing of large organizations such as the UNHCR.

The fact that Arabic refugees arrive to Chios who are not Syrian and that Syrians can relatively easily determine their region of origin is significant because people are waiting on Chios for Greek authorities to determine whether they have a chance to receive asylum or not. The principle of non-refoulement forbids to collectively reject refugees. However, for refugees and volunteers, it is very clear that certain groups of people will most likely be rejected; these include applicants from countries that are not the main sending regions. Arabs who pose as Syrians most likely do so because they believe their reason to enter the EU is not sufficient to receive asylum. If authorities detected fake Syrians quickly, they could most likely tick them off the list swiftly and turn to the next case. If it is as easy to determine people's origin by accent as Syrians claim, then placing a Syrian

interpreter at official interviews could facilitate a speeded procedure and thus shorten refugees' waiting period on Chios. According to refugees who had been interviewed on Chios, the Arabic interpreter spoke in an Egyptian accent and was even believed to be Greek and not an Arab native speaker. Of course determining applicants' actual origin is only the first step and has to be followed by appropriate steps to decide if they have another valid claim for asylum, but it could significantly reduce one of the ETD's main shortfalls that the European Commission (2016c) identified in December 2016.

Although language was the main marker by which Syrians identified people's origins, Mustafa touches on two other ways (personal communication A.6, July 28, 2016):

*I was talking to [...] a lady from Eritrea who is staying in the camp. I asked her, 'Where do you come from?' She said, 'I am from Syria, from Aleppo.' I told her, 'In Syria, there are no people with the colour of your skin, maybe in a certain place, maybe in Dara, I know it, and it has this type of people, but you are not from Syria.' And like this person, many people came in with the same story. That 'I am Syrian, I am Syrian.' A Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian, Jordanian. I know Jordanians who came from Jordan, and there is nothing [no problem or conflict] in Jordan. He came to seek asylum in Germany under the name of a Syrian and he has a Syrian document. And I told him that this document is a fake one, because I left Syria two months earlier and I know that this document is just a fake. And there is a Syrian seal and a stamp on it, and his name is Syrian, and he is even from my city. And I told him that we don't have something like that. So, everyone who came to Europe was coming under the name of Syrians.*

Especially camp residents from North Africa seemed to be socially and spatially separated from Syrians as they stayed among themselves. When I asked Abu Mohammed, why they did not tell the UNHCR that these were not actually Syrians, he simply replied it was not the Syrians' business to squeal on them. Nevertheless, the Syrians I spoke to distinguished themselves from such people.



They justified their self-construction as good people and genuine refugees in three main ways: 1) through separating themselves from other nationalities that were assumed to have a less legitimate claim for assistance; 2) by distinguishing themselves from criminal troublemakers; and 3) through constructing Syrians as civilized people who would be a benefit for Europe. Abu Mohammed, for instance, went on to say (personal communication A.4, July 23, 2016):

*And I would like to tell you again; our Syrian people are civilized. An amazing, civilized people. Our civilisation is one of the oldest civilizations. But unfortunately, the war displaced the people. [...] The Syrian people is nice, and I told you, in every case there are exceptions. There are exceptions. And I wish that Europe doesn't host those exceptions. And we are, thanks God, not hungry in our country. We are not coming to Europe to eat or to drink<sup>20</sup>. We are coming to integrate and to live our life normally. Not like Afghans; the Afghans sit, take financial benefits, and don't work, and don't integrate.*

Five refugee interviewees attempted to disprove certain prejudices they assumed Europeans might have against them: 1) They stressed that they did not come for money or to weigh heavy on Europe's shoulders, 2) they pronounced that they were against violence and specified that they were not criminals or terrorists; 3) they referred to their religion as possibly playing a role or stated they wanted to integrate and work; and 4) they made the reference that they were human and suggested that the situation could be turned around, that is, Europeans could find themselves in the same situation and need their help.

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<sup>20</sup> Arab saying meaning one is not looking for benefits

### 5.3.3. Volunteers' Construction of Refugees as Normal People

This last notion of refugees being normal people was very prevalent in interviews of volunteers as well. They often used the expression "They are like us". Eleven of the 13 interviewees stressed the importance of personal stories, conversations and contact to meet refugees on equal levels as "people like us". Nine seemed to identify with them, eight referred to refugees' dignity and the need for humanitarian, indiscriminate help. Four also stated that the roles of the needy person and privileged person could be inverted. Frances for instance said (personal communication B.1, July 18, 2016):

*Sometimes I am ashamed to be the person who is standing giving out some toiletries or some clothes to people, because I really know it could just as easily be the other way around. It's just, I was lucky enough to be born in Scotland. [...] At the moment we kind of sometimes think of volunteers and refugees, but [...] we are all just people. So, I like to think, if we ever had to flee Scotland because of a war, that there would be people who would welcome us.*

Frances' quote illustrates well how volunteers tended to view their relationship to refugees and political processes. While war was seen as an unfortunate event beyond the control of individuals that could hit anyone at any time, there was a sense of supporting others on the basis of shared humanity. Ignatieff (2000) argues that emphasizing what unites individuals, which might not be more than the shared experiences of pain and humiliation, is the very basis of human rights. Turner (2006), stresses as well that suffering is an experience that all humans share, and that is exactly what volunteers referred to when they said that political events like war – which means suffering - could hit anyone. Therefore, volunteers appealed to the idea of a common community, united through a general opposition to human suffering, thus transcending differences between them and

refugees and taking on their moral duty for care and respect, the basis on which human rights are built. This connects to responsibilities with regard to refugees on Chios, which will be examined in Chapter 6.

Furthermore, this construction of refugees as regular people served to present them as people who were not threatening. If they are “like us”, then there is no reason to be afraid of them. Instead, it evokes an obligation or an appeal to help them. Especially volunteers’ insistence on making this connection testifies to their assumption that this is not the common perception Europeans tend to have of refugees. How the refugee and the refugee crisis in general was perceived to pose a security threat to Europeans, European states, and the European Union, is explained in the next section.

#### **5.4. Striving for Security: Discussing Europe’s Response through International Relations**

The previous section elaborated on the notion that refugees could be good, bad, normal, genuine or fake. Which of these descriptions applies is very much subject to perception and any of these labels can be activated to further political agendas. While volunteers tend to stress common ground and shared humanity in order to justify refugees’ place in European society, defenders of anti-immigration arguments concentrate on fake and bad refugees that can pose a security threat. This connects to the idea of social constructivism’s idea (see Chapter 2) that there is not one reality but that different interpretations determine political action. This section will analyse how the construction of refugees as security threat informed states’ actions during 2015 and leading up to the ETD’s conclusion. However, my

analysis goes beyond the immediate threat bad people among the refugees might pose and extends to the significance of security concerns. These play a role for refugees themselves on the micro level, and for European member states and the EU on a macro scale.

#### **5.4.1. Refugees Seek Security**

On the individual level, security plays a role for Syrian refugees since they fled their country in the first place because it did not provide sufficient security. As mentioned in Chapter 2, seeking international protection builds the basis of any refugee definition. In the interviews, refugees did not only stress the importance of securing their own or their children's future, but also that they took great risks in order to reach that safety. Mustafa (personal communication A.6, July 28, 2016) summed this up when he said, "I have a 50 per cent chance that I will bring my children to safety, even if I have to pass through risks. I am like everyone else who wants to provide his children a better future." Considering that their decision to move is at the same time a decision to expose themselves to great security threats on their journey, it is understandable that refugees pick the destination with the highest chances for a safe and prosperous future. The refugees I talked to are very aware that not every European country or even EU member state offers the same degree of support, benefits and future prospects to them. It happens to be, that from a vantage point of Syrians' geographical position the preferred destinations lie on the northern end of Europe, with the most desired countries being Sweden and Germany, which have a very good reputation among refugees. This disequilibrium of asylum procedures among EU countries coupled with refugees'

search for the best available security, causes the movement from Europe's southern borders towards the north (Fratzke, 2015).

#### **5.4.2. Realism: Security Threats to European Union Member States**

Security plays a significant role from the perspective of European countries. Any state's central interest is security according to realism, one of the key international relations perspectives on international politics, which was described in Chapter 2. Indeed, public and political discussions about arriving refugees were very much linked to threats asylum seekers might pose to countries' and citizens' security. A survey in April 2016 found that in eight out of the ten EU member states where the study was conducted, more than half believed refugees increase the likelihood of terrorism in their country (Wike, Stokes & Simmons, 2016; "International Survey Methodology", 2016). In five countries, more than 50 per cent of its population thought that refugees will take away jobs and social benefits. Almost half in Italy and Sweden stated that refugees were more criminal than other groups. Additionally, fears of refugees were often linked and intermingled with general fears of Muslims (Wike et al., 2016).

However, much of this fear was connected to the fact that the great number of refugees carried the risk that also people who were not genuine refugees (see Chapter 2 and this chapter's previous section) would enter European countries on this way. In the best case scenario, these might be economic migrants who just use the overstressed migration control measures to make their way to countries enabling them to profit from economic benefits. In the worst case, they might be

members of terror organizations that could then plan and execute attacks from within. Gabiam (2016) goes as far as to say that Middle Eastern refugees are now seen as “embodying the threat of global terrorism” (p. 384) for some public figures. In between those scenarios lie criminals and troublemakers. With respect to fear of bad people and false refugees sneaking into Europe, Europeans’ perception is not far from the one of refugees that has been described in the previous section. It differs mainly in that refugees make a clear distinction between “good” and “bad” people, “genuine” and “false” refugees, while in European rhetoric, refugees were often lumped together and equated with a threat in general (although opposite efforts have also been pursued). These popular fears, which have undoubtedly been stoked through certain politicians, groups and media outlets during and since the crisis period, have been instrumentalized to political ends and to influence public opinion. Nevertheless, the major security threat to European nation states did not arise from it directly (Veebel & Markus, 2015).

Security threats arising from internal instability, in fact, had more measurable effects than the emotional fear of terrorism or increased criminality. Veebel and Markus (2015) wrote one of the few already published papers analysing the recent European refugee crisis. Although they examine security threats from a Baltic perspective, the majority of their findings can be applied to EU member states in general. According to them, security threats were primarily linked to governments losing credibility; in other words, that people projected their dissatisfaction with politicians’ crisis management could be projected onto a general discontent with governmental policies (Veebel & Markus 2015). This

argument could account in part for the increased success of parties located on the right spectrum in politics all throughout Europe since 2015 (Shuster, 2016).

The notion that refugees could pose a danger thus led to rising polarization among citizens, coupled with dissatisfaction with their governments' response, which in turn helped correspondent anti-immigration groups and parties gain power. Uneasiness among citizens together with the rise of parties on the right side of the political spectrum led to internal destabilization, which posed a greater threat to national security than the refugees themselves. Politicians' reactions to the refugees mirrored a certain fear of these dynamics in a very realist sense: In order to satisfy their citizens' call for firm action and under threat of losing credibility and popular support, they protected national interest, that is security, through closing their borders. They did so through policies<sup>21</sup>, through physical barriers<sup>22</sup>, and even through force<sup>23</sup>. In line with realist perspective on anarchy, commitments made to overarching authorities, like the EU (e.g. the border-free Schengen zone) or the UN (e.g. through the Declaration of Human Rights), were then frequently sacrificed for the pursuit of this national interest.

#### **5.4.3. Security Threats to the European Union**

On EU level, similar forces as the ones described above applied; most notably losing credibility and suffering internal polarization. The rise of the right wing all across Europe, together with internally destabilized member states and their

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. Slovakia's, Estonia's, Bulgaria's and Poland's refusal to grant asylum to non-Christians (Shuster, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Hungary's razor fence.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. violent escalations on the borders between Serbia and Hungary (Yan, Wedeman, Veselinovic & Hume, 2015).

unilateral measures posed a threat to the European project itself. Political realists do not principally believe in international authoritative structures like the EU, however, they do acknowledge that strategic action with the goal of pertaining national security can involve cooperation as long as it serves governments' goals. Indirectly, a weakening of the EU also sustained a security threat to individual member states, because being an EU member provides a certain degree of protection in the international arena (Veebel & Markus 2015).

A threat through loss of credibility in the international realm goes back to several weaknesses of the EU, which the crisis has revealed (Veebel & Markus, 2015): 1) The crisis suggested that the EU had lost control over its external borders. 2) It caused obvious fragmentation and decreased solidarity among member states. 3) The crisis led to vulnerability in economic terms. The EU and individual member states have spend money on the management and administration of the refugee influx. If citizens perceive that attempts to generate this money led to cutting in services that would otherwise have benefitted themselves, dissatisfaction can give reason to additional internal unrest (Veebel & Markus, 2015). Thus, security concerns played a significant role in Europeans', EU member states', and the EU's response to the refugee crisis. First, this led to fragmentation as individual states prioritized national interest. However, ultimately, it can also account for member states' decision to tackle the crisis collaboratively, since weakening the EU further could have had severe implications for the security of individual states that profit from the EU's protection.



#### 5.4.4. Liberalism: Saving the European Project

Nevertheless, some EU member states appeared to show sincere interest in living up to the European project by pleading for solidarity and upholding human rights and values. This behaviour can be better explained by liberalism (see Chapter 2), which is the second main international relations theory and builds the intellectual basis of the EU. European countries' responses to the recent refugee crisis in Europe veered between those two main streams of international relation theory. Ultimately, one could argue, they went for the liberalist solution, got together and struck a deal with Turkey as the supranational entity *European Union*.

Nevertheless, the deal testifies to a high level of desperation; as Collet (2016) put it, "The fact that a group of 28 states with increasingly divergent interests was able to find consensus speaks to the level of concern that leaders ha[d] for their own domestic political futures." Already in January 2016, the president of the European Council Donald Tusk predicted, "The March European Council will be the last moment to see if our strategy works. If it doesn't, we will face grave consequences such as the collapse of Schengen" (euronews, 2016), which is metaphorically equal to the failure of the European project (dw.com, 2016).

Chapter 6 explores different views on this European project actually is and concludes that the ETD did by no means save it, but gives additional reason to see it endangered. However, before moving on to the next section will shine light on Europe's response to the refugee crisis from a different perspective. Instead of regarding it through the political lense of international relations theory, it will analyse it from an anthropological standpoint, which is more concerned with human and social processes.

## **5.5. Striving for Order: Discussing Europe's Response through Anthropology**

Anthropology provides approaches to the analysing the same events that allow a different, enriching view to the international relations perspective. Van Gennep's (1960) and Turner's (1994) ideas have been applied to refugees on Chios in Chapter 4. This section will apply Mary Douglas' (1966) concept of matter out of place (see Chapter 2) in order to gain deeper understanding of the significance of the ETD on a social level.

### **5.5.1. The Refugee Crisis as Anomaly**

In Chapter 2, I listed Douglas' (1966) five strategies that can restore order when an anomaly to the system threatens it. The anomaly in the issue at hand is the steep increase in numbers of refugees travelling to and through Europe in 2015, considering that Europe had not seen flows of such magnitude since World War II (European Commission, 2015; Kerwin, 2016). Alone the labelling of the situation as *crisis* confirms its anomalous nature. This is related to Turner's (1994) three characteristics of liminal personae (see Chapter 2). One of those characteristics describes them as ambiguous as they fall between the cracks of established systems. As described earlier, the seemingly uncontrollable situation laid bare shortcomings in the EU's policy and *political systems* to deal with the issue. Thus, the refugee stream did not fit established systems, which was ultimately interpreted as a threat to the European project itself; in international relations it sustains a security threat, in Douglas' anthropology a threat to the order that provides individuals and societies with stability and thus security.

### 5.5.2. Five Strategies to Restore Order

Implementing Douglas' (1966) strategies (see Chapter 2), the EU had several possibilities to restore order, that is, to deal with the crisis. 1) The event could have been reinterpreted and therewith fit into a specific category. In practice, this could have taken two forms: On the one hand, one could have manipulated the refugee situation that enabled established policy frameworks to deal with them. This supposes that existing structures could have had the required capacity and that states would have complied with their commitments and duties in order to avoid the system from getting holes through which refugees could move into uncertain spaces, i.e. ambiguity. However, as elaborated above, states did not adhere to agreed-on rules in the European refugee regime<sup>24</sup>. On the other hand, one could have solved the crisis by establishing a new category, that is, engaged in finding an entirely new approach to dealing with the refugees independently of already established policy systems. However, given the urgency of the situation, such a drastic approach was not taken, although it might have been desirable.

2) The second strategy to restore order involves avoidance and ignoring. This approach has indeed been prevalent during 2013 and 2014, when the crisis started to evolve but there was no particular attention paid to it. In 2015, it was simply too visible to effectively turn a blind eye to it. 3) The third of Douglas' approaches could also be observed: the flows and refugees in general were labelled dangerous. As explained previously, refugees were constructed as a

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<sup>24</sup> E.g. Greece did not sufficiently protect asylum seekers' human rights, which led to the suspension of Dublin transfers back to Greece; Hungary did not process incoming refugees anymore but let them pass through the country without registration; etc.

threat to individual and national security. This somewhat helps to justify strategy 4), namely physically controlling the anomaly. In the most extreme sense of Douglas' tactic this would mean to eliminate the crisis-causing refugee stream through killing. However, physical control also includes the employment of increased border control through authorities (take for instance NATO's involvement in patrolling the sea corridor between Chios and Turkey, the erection of physical barriers (like Hungary's fence), detention of refugees, and restricting their irregular movement by settling them in organized camps. According to Malkki (1992), the refugee camp is a technology of care, control, and exercise of power in order to manage space and movement for people out of place. Strategy 5), calling attention to other levels of existence, can be applied to states' positioning as sovereign powers. As elaborated on earlier, the refugee crisis posed a threat to European countries and the Union, because their institutions appeared unable to cope with it. Thus, a way to tackle the anomaly for states is to reclaim their right and ability to perform control over the bodies of refugees (see Hansen & Stepputat, 2006) and position themselves as protector of the masses, that is, their citizens.

### **5.5.3. Restoring Order through the EU-Turkey Deal**

If applied to the ETD, anthropologist Douglas' perspective on matter out of place shows how the deal embodies a response to an anomaly as described by Douglas (1966). In its first article, the ETD is even described as "extraordinary measure which is necessary to [...] restore public order." It represents an adjustment of existing systems to organize the refugee flow (first strategy). This adjustment relies heavily on physical control (fourth strategy) through tightened border

controls, comprehensive registration, and controlled conditions restricting movement through camp structures and keeping them on islands that build a naturally confined area and impede breaking out of the system. All these measures ultimately help to keep refugees in the system. Furthermore, the EU communicated through the ETD that it regained control over the situation and can thus claim legitimacy as sovereign power to its citizens (fifth strategy). Additionally, this communicates to refugees who have not yet crossed into Europe that they will be subjected to control if they do. Indirectly, the second strategy also shows in the ETD, as most EU member states can now breathe a sigh of relief as the refugee crisis is contained in countries on the periphery of the EU, primarily Greece, and they can regard the issue as solved in their direct surroundings and therefore ignore the crisis that continues to smoulder in Greece.

This chapter has provided an overview of events that led to the establishment of the ETD. It also described the deal and how refugees and volunteers on Chios interpreted it. Furthermore, it covered findings of the field research concerning the construction of refugees as regular people and their own distinction between good and bad, genuine and fake refugees. In order to increase understanding of the circumstances under which the deal was concluded and its significance for European member states and Union, I analysed Europe's response to the refugee crisis through two disciplines' perspectives: 1) I interpreted the events through the role of security in international relations theories and 2) with regard to Mary Douglas' concept of matter out of place, which threatens systems and calls for restoration of order. The chapter presented the events leading up to the ETD as

anomalous since they uncovered insufficiencies of the European refugee regime. Thus, the chapter put the refugees' humanitarian situation on Chios into political context. It sought to show how increased refugee flows coupled with insufficient policy constructs in place and certain political decisions led to a crisis. In order to restore public order threatened by this crisis, it was put to a halt through the ETD. The encountered situation on Chios, in turn, is a consequences of the ETD (see Chapter 4). The next chapter will look at questions of responsibility and European identity and analyse how the ETD, which was meant to solve a refugee crisis, is essentially a manifestation of a European crisis and requires the EU to assume responsibility for refugees stranded on Greek islands.

## 6. Expectations and Responsibility of Europe

*On the other hand, there is just people like you and me, there is amazing local people, we must not forget them, because they started reaching out to the refugees when nobody saw the situation in the world and they just, because people ended up on their beaches, they started to do what was needed. And now, an amazing community of international volunteers that come on their own money, with donations from their friends, not backed by any big NGOs, and they do so much, in January there were, I think, 16 in our team, now it's 30, 35 and it's amazing what a few dozen people who are committed and who are willing really can achieve. All the more, I think, 500 million people in the European Union, the strongest economy in the world, should easily deal, be able to deal with this problem. This is not a refugee crisis, this is a crisis of political intentions and will and decisions that are made one way or another. (Alex, personal communication B.6, July 29, 2016)*

This quote illustrates several points that this chapter will cover. However, I first want to recall what I have discussed so far in order to see the circle closing towards the end of this research paper. This thesis seeks to explore how the refugees' humanitarian situation on Chios and the overall consequences of the EU-Turkey Deal (ETD) are a manifestation of a European crisis. The second chapter laid the foundation for analysis and discussion by locating the refugee in history, reviewing academic literature and theory, and clarifying its definition. The third chapter revealed the methodology of my field research, which led to the extraction of six key themes in refugees' and volunteers' interviews on Chios that build the thesis' skeleton and are reflected in the research question. The fourth chapter introduced two of those themes that dealt with imminent challenges that refugees face on the island and illustrated the humanitarian situation, namely bad living conditions in the camps and the state of waiting. The fifth chapter traced the occurrence of these two themes back to March 20 when the ETD took effect. It

also gave an overview of the timeline leading up to the escalation of increased refugee streams migrating to and through the EU to a crisis and analysed Europe's reactions. Additionally, the chapter covered two themes, namely interviewees' referral to and interpretation of the ETD, and the notion of refugees as genuine or fake, and good, bad, or normal people.

The last part of the thesis' central argument that the EU has to take responsibility for the refugees it continues to strand on Greek islands. This sixth chapter clarifies Europe's role in and responsibility for the refugee situation on Chios. It defends the conclusion that the EU as political entity bears primary responsibility for refugees on Chios. This allocation of responsibility has two dimensions: 1) Through concluding the ETD, the EU brought about the immediate issues (see Chapter 5), which are subject to critique on Chios (see Chapter 4). 2) Since the EU is responsible for the circumstance that refugees are stranded on Chios, it is also responsible for addressing the consequences. Derived from the EU's image, the extent to which these have to be remedied and the level of humanitarian and legal standards the EU has to secure, assistance has to far exceed current provisions.

This chapter's structure follows the process that led to this conclusion. It first covers the last one of the six themes, namely refugees' and volunteers' immediate relationship to Europe expressed in the interviews. This part includes proposed solutions, an examination of refugees' and volunteers' expectations of Europe, and Europe's self-definition. The second part focuses on actors that are already involved in the humanitarian response on Chios. It also determines the degree to which these bear responsibility to provide assistance. The chapter concludes that



the EU carries responsibility for the refugees on Chios because their agreement on the ETD directly caused the refugees to be in a situation in which they cannot provide for themselves.

### **6.1. Refugees' and Volunteers' Relationship with Europe**

Europe was omnipresent and at the same time invisible on Chios as in people's minds, Europe was constructed as an almost god-like entity that was determining and leading their lives. The idea of Europe was especially present in refugees' wish to "go to Europe". Both, refugees and volunteers, constructed Europe as the entity that had the biggest direct influence on the situation on Chios. However, Europe was not physically present on Chios; there was no container with representatives of the EU in Souda (see Chapter 3) one could have approached, and there were no supplies marked with the logo of an official EU organization. This is significant, because from the viewpoint of volunteers and refugees on Chios, the challenges they faced (see Chapter 4) were consequences of political decisions taken by European bodies (see Chapter 5). However, they had no means to address the overarching structures, which were believed to have the power to solve the issues that refugees struggled with and volunteers sought to ease.

#### **6.1.1. Bridging a Perceived Communication Gap**

Volunteers and refugees likewise talked *about* Europe, but not *to* Europe since the absence of approachable contact points led to a perceived communication gap. I set up the interviews in a way that they functioned as a connection between the people on the island and Europe (see Chapter 3), thus bridging the communication gap as interviewees' voice could now reach Europe. Interviewees

readily seized this opportunity and made use of it to an extent that I had not expected. Five of the volunteers appealed directly to the audience in Europe during the interview. This dynamic was also very present among refugee interviewees. Five of them addressed Europe directly by voicing demands, pleas and appeals. Frequently, they also shifted their glance from the main interviewer to directly looking into the camera. Refugees also tended to emphasize well-rounded formulations, partly even trying to speak in formal Arabic, and rhetoric strategies to bring across their stories and claims. Five also stated, or asked Europe directly, that they wished understanding from Europe and that they were hoping their voice would reach Europe. These dynamics testify to the (perceived) communication gap between individuals on Chios and citizens or decision makers in Europe. This illustrates once more how the people affected by political decisions had limited possibilities to address their problems' causes and solve the situation.

Volunteers frequently positioned themselves as bridging this communication gap between the refugees and decision makers or people in Europe. In the interviews, six stated that people in Europe needed to know what was going on in Chios, implying that the general population did not know about it and that it would influence the situation if they did. Five of them constructed volunteers as being this link between the refugees on Chios and the European population as they would talk about their experiences once they went back to their home countries. Three also referred to the need of accurate reporting by the media, which were perceived to distort the image of refugees and the refugee crisis.

### 6.1.2. Proposed Solutions and Strategies to the Refugee Question

Interviewees also used the opportunity to propose solutions to the issues on Chios. While refugees were less vocal about precise approaches to solve the issue (two said their war had to be solved, otherwise they mainly simply asked for help or to be let into Europe), volunteers were very outspoken in terms of assigning responsibility and proposing solutions. In general, they seemed to place the responsibility on two pillars, namely politics and individuals. Five interviewees referred to individuals' responsibility, such as Isabel (personal communication B.5, July 28, 2016):

*I think it's not only the problem of the politician[s], I think it's the problem of all of us. Because many people [are] like, 'Okay, yeah, the politician ...' but later, also, they don't want to be with them [the refugees], or they don't want to have them as neighbour.*

Several ones also directly called for Europeans to get involved and come to Chios to volunteer, such as Aurelien (personal communication B.2, July 20, 2016), "Just join us! Come, in Greece, in Lesvos, in Chios, in anywhere, just join us, come!" or Andoni (personal communication B.7, July 29, 2016), "Please! For everyone, help, everybody, because they are the same like us."

Often, their perception of being unable to actually tackle the overarching problem, which was attributed to political decisions, led them to resort to "little things" that they could do with their limited means within the spaces that the system left them. These "little things" were considered important to relieve refugees' living situation and to ultimately amount to bigger change. Five volunteers referred to that in their interviews. Jan for example said (personal communication B.3, July 20, 2016):

*Don't feel that if you do something small [...] for somebody, that it doesn't matter. It's really important that we trust in the small acts of kindness to each other [...] we can just do small things. We can give a child some bubbles, we can [...] give somebody a shirt, or share a joke, you know, those things are really important.*

Dinah and her husband Alex mentioned it as well, which caused Alex to give the following example (personal communication B.6, July 29, 2016):

*Today, I spent 40 euros on hairbands for the women in the camps, from the one-euro shop. So, a big bag of – I never bought hairbands in my life! And they make a difference! Because, they make, you think it's not essential to survive, but like Dinah just said, it makes you feel human again; to feel more beautiful. So, little contributions can really, [...] it really makes a difference.*

Four proposed as a solution to be non-political and therefore help anyone on a humanitarian basis, such as Frances and her husband Andy, who said (personal communication B.1, July 18, 2016):

*We both try really, really hard to be non-political, because I don't know the answers. [...] I think it is wrong, but I couldn't offer a solution. So, we avoid the politics and we just try to be involved in what we call humanitarian aid. If someone is in danger, then we try to help them. But I am not judging whether they should have needed the crossing in a boat or not. The fact is, they have. And they deserve to be cared for.*

Four volunteers said European governments had to share the burden and distribute refugees over EU member states. Three emphasized the importance of collaboration among actors on the island, but also among European governments. Three advocated for open borders, while two stated open borders were not a solution. Other proposed solutions were building long-term, sustainable peace through international cooperation, developing a plan on European and international level, informing refugees that Europe was not that great after all, launching serious attempts to tackle the problem instead of ignoring it, and

getting rid of political leaders who misuse their power, that is, revolutionizing the entire political system.

### **6.1.3. Disappointment with the Dream of Europe**

Apart from Europe's importance in solving the issues refugees and volunteers encountered on Chios, the idea of Europe played a major role in form of the "dream of Europe". This dream came packaged as expectations. Expectations are formed through what people know, what they were told, what they heard; in short, expectations are the stories that shape their worldview. These assumptions are so deeply ingrained in their convictions, that they only become aware of them once they are suddenly inverted. The arrival to Chios confronted both, refugees and volunteers, with their expectations. Alex's interview quote is the perfect example for this in the eyes of a European (personal communication B.6, July 29, 2016):

*When you grow up in Central or in Northern Europe, you tend to think, 'Okay, there are institutions that are in charge'. There, if anyone is sick, there is health insurance, there is hospitals, there is doctors and have to help. And if your security is in danger, there is police, there is the government, they'll take care of you. And basically we are taken care of. And I came here and I realized; the Greek government is not really present; the European Union can't be found; big NGOs do very little; and all the actors that you would normally expect from, maybe, at least in the bubble I grew up in, they are not there. Or if they are there, some of what we are seeing now of police or Frontex or other players is more hindering the work than actually being there for people in need.*

Expectations voiced in interviews on Chios were closely linked and juxtaposed to disappointment of these expectations. In the following, I will elaborate on refugees' expectations and volunteers' beliefs of Europe, as well as Europe's self-image.

Expectations of Europe were brought up by ten of the eleven refugee interviewees. This number counts people who expressed disappointment or shock, or who talked about their expectations or ideas they had of Europe before they came to the island. The keywords that they used more frequently to describe Europe in their view were civilisation, human treatment, humanity, and safety. They also mentioned ethics, values, manners, hard-working, developed, freedom, and democracy. If refugees talked about their expectations of Europe it was often combined with their disappointment with conditions in Greece. Either they channelled this disappointment into anger and disbelief, or, what was very common, they rationalized it as the real Europe only starting somewhere beyond Greece.

Volunteers, too, talked about Europe and about disappointed expectations in a way that showed their surprise of finding such conditions on Chios. Seven of the 13 interviewees expressed that they were surprised, shocked, ashamed, or that the conditions and treatment were inhuman. Three of them implicitly expressed that this was not Europe. It was also mentioned that the situation on Chios was not civilized and placed the European value-based community at stake. European volunteers were aware that Chios was part of Europe and the EU, which lay at the very heart of their disappointment. They were of the opinion that such conditions should not exist in Europe and therefore posed a serious problem to the European identity. Alex, for instance, said (personal communication B.6, July 29, 2016):

*Greece is really at the heart of Europe, or should be. But has been treated like, yeah, some, some border country in between, where basically 'we store the refugees' to put it bluntly. And this is not an, yeah, any dignified way of*

*treating even the Greek people or the refugees. So, this is not pushed away somewhere, but this is Europe. And this is us. And we should be taking control of the situation and we should and we can.*

As expressed in this quote, volunteers' concern with refugees' situation had partially to do with their belief that they as individuals were also part of Europe. Thus, what they experienced on Chios as wrong was perceived to have happened in their name, which was often met with shame. Naia for instance said in her interview (personal communication B.5, July 28, 2016), "I want to say, the people, that they are like us. Yeah. And the only difference is that, now, we are free and they no[t], because we – make it. And I feel shame about that." Turner (2006) explains this dynamic in the context of human rights violations. According to him, official moral wrongs are considered worse than private ones not only because they often harm more people more severely, but also because they are usually committed quite openly under the name of law and justice. Thus, they do not only deprive their victims of the object of their rights, but attack those very rights themselves. This is the reason why people feel personally responsible and are ashamed on account of their governments' actions committed in their name (Turner, 2006). This last part also connects to the volunteers' insistence that roles of refugees and Europeans might one day be exchanged (see Chapter 5); if the EU attacks basic rights through the treatment of refugees, then that European citizens like the volunteers means could also be deprived of these rights.

To lead that point even further, volunteers also voiced that they as individuals were Europe and were therefore partly responsible not only for the situation as it was, but also to try and improve refugees' situation. Alex, for instance, said

(personal communication B.6, July 29, 2016), “this society, or Europe, that really is us. So, we can’t wait for somebody else, or we can’t blame the politicians or big organizations for not doing their job.” The quotes also illustrate individuals’ belief that their actions can have an effect on politics and that they carry a certain responsibility as European or even global citizens, which goes in line with social constructivism (see Chapter 2). This is significant for this thesis as it relates to the question of responsibility to take care of refugees on Chios, which will be examined in the end of this chapter.

#### **6.1.4. The Ambiguous Definition of Europe**

The expectations refugees and volunteers connected to Europe touch on the issue that although Europe was omnipresent in people’s minds, the definition of this Europe stayed very ambiguous. This was particularly common among refugees, who rarely specified who or what Europe actually was. Did they refer to a geographical continent? The European Union? A combination of all member states’ governments? Or was it maybe comprised of individual Europeans? When they appealed to Europe, they seldom specified which part of Europe they actually addressed, used them interchangeably or came up with other concepts like Abu Mohammed when he referred to Europe as a country (personal communication A.4, July 23, 2016):

*Abu Mohammed: We want to go on to Europe, because Europe is the country of humanity. [...]*

*Abu Ahmed: But you are already in Europe.*

*Abu Mohammed: No, no, this is not Europe.*

*Abu Ahmed: Greece is in the European Union.*

*Abu Mohammed: No, it’s not Europe.*



This conversation took place during the interview with Abu Mohammed, when another refugee passed by and joined the discussion. It reflects the reactions I usually received when I pointed refugees to the fact that Chios is part of Greece, which belongs to the EU and the European continent, and that they are therefore technically in Europe already; they vehemently refused to accept that idea. When I asked Methkal (personal communication A.2, July 20, 2016) specifically in his interview if he felt like he was in Europe, he replied, “No, this is not Europe. No.” Thereupon, I asked, “What is it then?” and he answered, “It’s a prison here. Not Europe”.

Simply being part of the EU therefore did not seem to constitute Europe in refugees’ eyes. When I asked them in casual conversations where Europe started in their opinion, I never received a clear answer. However, it seemed to be somewhere around Austria and north of it. The UNHCR’s (2016b) Regional Response Plan, mirrored refugees’ construction of the geographical start of Europe when it stated that thousands of people travelled “through Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia before reaching their final destination in Europe” (p. 10). In refugees’ eyes, Europe appeared to consist of the countries whose treatment of refugees had a good reputation, such as Germany or Sweden. Despite the confusing construction of Europe, they were aware of which countries were part of the EU, mainly fixed on the Dublin Regulation (see Chapter 5). While Hungary was surely not a desired destination, they were aware that it was an EU member state simply because they knew of the danger that Hungarian authorities could detect and force them to give their fingerprints when attempting to cross the country on their way to their

desired destinations. For them, Macedonia and Serbia sustained a relatively safe, though difficult to cross, corridor on their way to Europe, because these countries were not part of the Dublin Regulation. This might also have had an influence on their perception that Greece was not Europe, because on a virtual refugee map it was not connected to the Dublin-Europe, in which movement for refugees on their way to their desired destination is particularly difficult.

This relates back to social constructivism, which holds that ideas shape any political reality and change actors' behaviour accordingly. Such ideas of what Europe is and which countries embody this dream of Europe, shape refugee flows to and through the EU and determine refugees' lives on Chios to a high degree. If they constructed Chios as part of Europe and their goal was to reach Europe, they could settle emotionally because they reached their destination and thus exited the liminal space (see Chapter 4). This would change the face of the current crisis tremendously and accordingly would have produced responses that are different from the ETD.

Volunteers tended to adapt the arbitrary usage of the concept of Europe from refugees. Nevertheless, they were usually more precise in specifying which European body they referred to, for example the European parliament, European people or European governments. This is probably also due to their familiarity with Europe sustained through their position within Europe. I already mentioned that they frequently referred to themselves as being part of Europe and the connected feeling of shame. I also already elaborated on the dynamic that volunteers saw individuals and political structures as the main actors in causing

and solving the issues around refugees. This can be extended to their view that Europe is made up of an interplay between individuals and structure-giving politics. Now that I expanded on refugees' and volunteers' ideas about Europe, I will give a glimpse into the EU's self-image, because its self marketing contributes significantly to the formation of ideas people hold in and beyond Europe.

#### **6.1.5. The European Union's Self-Definition**

“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities,” reads Article 2 of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union (2012) from 1992. The EU defines itself as value-based power, which exerts a certain appeal globally (Skordely, 2012). Article 3 of the same treaty declares that the EU “shall uphold and promote its values and interests” worldwide and shall contribute to “mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.”

Furthermore, article 21 holds that “The Union’s action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation” stressing once more its pursuit to “safeguard its values” and globally advance “the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.” In a document

addressing external action in the refugee crisis, the European Commission (2015) based its response to the crisis “on the principles of solidarity and responsibility and in full respect of its values and international obligations”. Thus, the EU is aware of the importance of their values, which they claim are universal, but as Ignatieff (2000) wrote, universality also requires consistency and that one follows the obligation to practice what one preaches. This puts the EU on permanent trial.

A document published by EuropeanValues.info (n.d.) identifies six fundamental European values, which build on each other starting from the basis of humanistic thinking, rationality, secularity, rule of law, democracy, and finally, human rights. Together, these build the humanistic world-view, which “starts with the thought of giving *value to a human being* (humanistic thinking) and ends with the thought of giving *value to all people* (human rights)” (p. 6). The document also includes the notion that these values are considered universal and desirable to apply to all people in this world. Thus, the EU is built upon and globally markets itself as value based community. It does not only promote this image for itself, but also to apply to any person in the world. It is this appeal that both refugees and volunteers base their expectations on and owe their disappointment to once they arrive on Chios and see severe shortcomings in the practical implementation of this visionary promise.

This section described Europe’s role for refugees and volunteers on Chios. While Europe appears to be omnipresent in people’s minds, it is at the same time unapproachable. When the setup of my formal interviews enabled refugees and

volunteers to talk to Europe, thus bridging the perceived communication gap, they readily seized the opportunity to voice a number of solutions and strategies to tackle refugee related problems. The section also examined disappointed expectations of Europe and the underlying self-definition of the EU that actively contributes to the formation of the “dream of Europe”. This section thus covered the last of the six interview themes and enhanced understanding of what Europe stands for. This is important, since this thesis argues that the refugees’ humanitarian situation on Chios and the overall consequences of the ETD are a manifestation of a European crisis. Subsequently, I will elaborate on why I assign responsibility to provide assistance for refugees on Chios to the EU.

The following quote of Alex does not only refer to the EU’s responsibility derived from its values, but simultaneously provides a good transition to the next section, as he names a number of actors that could be held responsible to attend to refugees on Chios (personal communication B.6, July 29, 2016):

*Of course we talk about Europe as a value-based community. And then the value is very often only the value of the Euro, and that’s what [...] people are concerned about. And the values of Europe are really at stake here in the Aegean Sea and in the central Mediterranean around Lampedusa. And I expect the German government and the European government, the European commission, really to step it up and take responsibility one more time. And they were awarded the Nobel peace prize a few years ago; I think, there is some living-up to do right now. And the Greek government, well, they can’t really be blamed for the situation they are in, but the European community, like I said, is the strongest economy in the world, or one of the strongest, one of the strongest political forces in the world, and we can solve much larger problems. We talk about one million people who came to Europe last year and we are 500 million, this is, this is really nothing. And if we put our mind to ‘We can do it!’ - this is what Angela Merkel said ‘Wir schaffen das!’ - then that’s really a matter of what we want to do, what we want to accomplish. It’s not like Europe is teetering on the, I don’t know, on the cliff of, you know, falling to ruin or anything, because of the refugee situation. So, I expect political action, but we cannot wait for that to happen, we have to start moving.*

## **6.2. Providing Assistance for Refugees on Chios: Practice and Responsibility**

I hold that the assignment of responsibility is linked to expectations like the ones described in the previous section. For instance, none of the Syrian refugees I talked to ever mentioned that it might be the president of Syria, responsibility to take care of them. They would not expect the man to take responsibility for their wellbeing who has never been democratically elected, was the first to give orders to open fire on civilians, and whose bombs many of them were fleeing (BBC, 2015c). However, people did expect from international actors who pride themselves with their wealth, democratic values and influence to at least help in a case of obvious transgression of basic international agreements and violation of human rights. It goes beyond the scope of this thesis to determine which actions the EU should take to realize this help. Nevertheless, in context with this thesis, appropriate help surely includes attending to the people who flee the conflict and land on EU territory.

In order to determine actors' responsibility for providing assistance to refugees on Chios, I grouped them into four categories: 1) the international community as primarily represented by the UNHCR and other big NGOs; 2) Greek authorities as national actor; 3) independent volunteers representing Europe's citizens; and 4) the EU as regional political entity. Subsequently, I will examine all of them in terms of their responsibility according to the degree of their involvement in causing the circumstances, their moral or legal obligation, their available resources and their ability or power to influence causing factors or the system reinforcing the refugees' conditions. This also includes a rough and by no means

complete overview of the actors' current involvement in the refugee response on Chios.

However, a question that should be asked first is; does anyone have a responsibility to take care of the refugees on Chios in the first place? From a realist perspective, as was examined in Chapter 5, in which non-state actors have no significant role to play in the first place, and in which state interest stands above all, one could argue, there is no responsibility. However, since Chios is part of the EU, which has not been founded on realist principles but rather on values, my answer to the question is clearly: yes, on all levels of politics - from the international community, to the EU, its member states, non-governmental organizations and individual Europeans – actors bear a certain responsibility to secure a dignified life for refugees and protect their rights. This being established, there is still a question of who should be primarily responsible for providing assistance.

### **6.2.1. The International Community's Responsibility**

The UN with the UNHCR provides the framework for the international refugee regime and states' obligations towards refugees. In terms of means, UN and UNHCR bundle experience and influence with a budget provided by a multitude of states. It therefore cannot only provide know-how and work power but also material necessities in crisis situations. However, I regard the UNHCR as the internationally funded safety net, which helps out in crisis situations where state actors do not have sufficient resources to sustain refugees' lives. Since the refugees on Chios are located in Europe, which sets the very standard for the

developed, wealthy world, it is somewhat questionable if the UNHCR should indeed be the main provider of aid.

UNHCR has set up a Regional Refugee and Migration Response Plan for Europe for the year 2016. It was revised after the ETD's conclusion, primarily shifting assistance from targeting moving populations to static ones (UNHCR, 2016b). In the May 2016 revision, they state that they need a budget of USD 669,867,115 to implement that plan for 2016 (USD 466,836,326 of these are allocated for Greece.). By August, only 58 per cent of that were funded (UNHCR, 2016c). Interestingly, a European Commission (2016a) press release from March 19 stated that "the Commission estimates the costs of the practical implementation of the [EU-Turkey] Statement to be around €280 million euro over the next six months." If I divide the required budget for the UNHCR response plan into half (for half a year), they require 300 million euros alone for their mission. Although I am aware that this is a highly simplified equation, it does somewhat illustrate that the UNHCR supplies substantial assistance to refugees that is not covered by the European Commission.

In the press release, the UNHCR is only mentioned as "a key actor in the resettlement process to provide additional support and supervision" in context with the refugees sent back to Turkey, not as receiver of financial means. However, the EU is a contributor to the response plan, next to primarily EU member states (UNHCR, 2016d). Part of the plan is that UNHCR subcontracts some 60 organizations (UNHCR, 2016b). It is also possible that the EU subcontracted UNHCR for provisions for refugees stranded in Greece, however, I



could not find any document breaking down its budgets. Without UNHCR, the situation on Chios would most likely look even worse, although according to what I saw on Chios and what volunteers and refugees told me, they did not manage to provide refugees with basic needs (such as food, which is cooked and sponsored by independent volunteers). Thus, the plan has either severely suffered from the financial shortcuts, or it has been planned in an insufficient scope.

Mills (2016) argues that the international community's primary responsibility should be to cure causes of humanitarian crises rather than the symptoms. This would include the enforcement of the responsibility to protect and to prosecute. I see the primary role of the international community in avoiding refugee crises from happening in the first place and attending to regions with insufficient resources, rather than providing humanitarian assistance to refugees in Greece, which is indeed only curing symptoms. Additionally, international institutions like the UN have the power to name and shame (Ignatieff, 2000) and should make use of that in the case of the EU's questionable response to and treatment of refugees. Therefore, although the UNHCR does contribute assistance in Europe, the international community beyond the EU does not bear primary responsibility for providing assistance to refugees in Chios (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

### **6.2.2. The Greek Government's Responsibility**

The Greek government could be held responsible to deal with the issue, simply because the refugees are located on their territory. According to the international refugee regime, which is based on the premise that the state is the primary provider of protection for individuals, it is states that have to take responsibility

for refugees by examining their asylum applications and granting protection if they are found eligible. However, in the case of Greece, this would be too simple as it also forms the outer border of the EU. By accident of geographic location Greece thus faces an increased influx of refugees who want to cross it on their way north. If seen as part of the EU, Greece has responsibility for refugees due to the Dublin Regulation. This regulation's conclusion rested on the assumption that asylum systems would be harmonized across member states. This has not happened and therefore weakened the system (Fratzke, 2015) and ultimately also led to the suspension of the regulation for Greece. The ETD, an EU agreement, strained Greece additionally.

The Greek government was assigned with the task to process arrivals' asylum claims in collaboration with the UNHCR (2016b), which wrote in May that the capacity of the Asylum Service to register and process asylum claims and the provision of services were insufficient. Additionally, the Chios municipality provides services for the refugees as Vasillis summarized in his interview (personal communication B.8, August 02, 2016). This also has to be seen against the background of Greece's resources. It is caught in a severe financial crisis and receives money from the EU to sustain the lives of its citizens already (European Commission, 2016d). Against this background, burdening it with the additional responsibility for all refugees who want to go to Europe (not Greece), is quite contra-productive. Volunteers and refugees also rarely claimed Greece had to do more for them. Three and four interviewees of refugees and volunteers even referred to the financial crisis out of own initiative. They also acknowledged that they found it unfair from the EU and other European countries to not support

Greece more in the task of attending to the refugees. Alex put it this way (personal communication B.6, July 29, 2016), “Greece is really at the heart of Europe, or should be, but has been treated like some border country in between; where basically ‘we store the refugees’ to put it bluntly.”

A series of press releases by the European Commission (2016a, 2016b, 2016c) published over the year 2016 give an overview of numbers of arriving refugees in Greece, carried out deportations to Turkey, and changing allocation of EU support in staff and financial resources for Greece. While the press releases of March (2016a) and June (2016b) express an optimistic attitude about their actions and register first successes, the one issued on December 8 appears less optimistic as it mentions several challenges in the implementation of the ETD. Such include “important shortfalls” in deploying staff to Greek islands, which is, according to the press release, due to EU member states’ lack of response to calls for support. One section speaks of “additional efforts on all sides” to “alleviate the pressure on the islands” with particular reference to eliminating the backlog of asylum cases on Greek islands. They also refer to the need to improve security, safety, and public order, probably a response to conflicts and theft committed by refugees (see Chapter 4), but also escalating confrontations of fed-up local populations with refugees (see for instance Smith & Kingsley, 2016). The European Commission’s acknowledgement of shortcomings in the ETD’s implementation regarding the situation in Greece testify to the observations I elaborated on in previous Chapters. However, it also illustrates that Greece is not considered the primary bearer of responsibility and that the burden is too great for Greece alone if the EU member states collectively cannot even cater for the most pressing

needs. Thus, neither the Greek national government nor Chios municipality can be assigned with the primary responsibility.

### **6.2.3. European Citizens' Responsibility**

The third possible bearer of responsibility for refugees on Chios are European citizens. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the course of the refugee crisis has seen an extraordinary engagement from civil society, be it initiatives pro or contra refugees. Europeans are also present on Chios in the form of non-governmental organizations and volunteers. UNHCR subcontracted NGOs to provide part of the tasks that they were assigned to cover, the May report (UNHCR, 2016b) gives an overview of these. These NGOs were joined by organizations that work with unpaid volunteers, such as A Drop in the Ocean. Additionally, there are groups working on the island that have been set up very recently in response to the refugee crisis and frequently do not even have the formal status of an NGO. CESRT is one of those and all volunteer interviewees belonged to such groups. They frequently described their work as “filling gaps” that were left by big organizations and authorities. These gaps reached from distributing shampoo and tents to providing food for the refugees, which suggests that vital parts of providing assistance were not covered by big organizations or authorities present in the camps.

Volunteers face three main limitations in providing assistance (see Chapter 4). 1) Financial resources are provided through donations of individuals and accordingly small. 2) Individuals are still doomed to act within the political systems that are imposed from above. Many volunteers are aware that the

assistance they can provide merely makes refugees' lives a slight bit better, but does not actually provide them with a sustainable solution. Their insistence on the importance of "small things" is connected to that. 3) Volunteers experience psychological and emotional effects. Most of them are not trained to cope with trauma, yet they are confronted with their own emotionally straining experiences and refugee's traumatic stories on a daily basis. Many of them felt powerless in the face of the issues' magnitude and their inability to tackle these challenges within authoritative, restrictive structures that sustain the situation, which volunteers seek to solve.

Despite the difficulties independent volunteers faced, they insisted on the importance of individual Europeans to get active, "do little things", and ultimately influence politics to make a bigger change. Turner (2006) wrote that on a moral basis, the recognition that humans share basic needs, which translate into human rights, involves a commitment to oppose official disrespect of such. Pogge (1995) argues that regardless of their claimed universality, human rights are only secure if a vigilant citizenry is committed to fight for their rights' political realization as they are the ultimate guardians on which rights' fulfilment depend. This is what volunteers on Chios do and what I consider a responsibility of European civil society members.

Nonetheless, they should not and cannot be the ones to assume primary responsibility for refugees who were deprived of the ability to care for themselves because of political decisions, which those individuals might not even support. Furthermore, the politically imposed structures were highly restrictive

on certain initiatives (see Chapter 4 on volunteers facing opposition from authorities). Lastly, this can especially not be a solution as long as they are supposed to provide assistance during their annual vacation from their own funds and donations from friends.

#### **6.2.4. The European Union's Responsibility**

In November 2015, Human Rights Watch (2015) published an article, which argues that although the international community has a role in addressing global refugee challenges, the EU with its institutions and member states have a specific obligation to people on its territory.<sup>25</sup> After March 20, with the implementation of the ETD, this responsibility became even more important, because the direct cause for refugees being situated on Greek territory shifted. As long as refugees could still flow through the Greek islands to continue their way to their desired destination, one could search for responsible entities on national level. However, now they are forced to stay on islands like Chios against their will, with no means to provide for themselves, and with almost no loopholes left to escape the islands because the EU took measures to hold them there. As previous chapters discussed, the ETD is the overarching system that rules the refugees' and other actors' lives on Chios. Because the ETD is an agreement that was concluded collectively by EU member states, it is the EU that is directly responsible for the fact that refugees are stranded on Chios. It was not the UN that advised the EU to contain refugees outside or on the periphery of Europe; it was not the Greek government or people that wanted to keep arrivals on its islands; it was not

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<sup>25</sup> The article (Human Rights Watch, 2015) also lists a number of concrete measures that the EU should take to tackle the issues.

individual European citizens who came up with the idea; it was an EU decision. Therefore, the EU bears primary responsibility to provide assistance for the refugees on Chios. Although the European Commission assumed responsibility for the ETD's implementation, there appear to be significant shortcomings either in the scope or the implementation (European Commission, 2016c). Given its fundamental values, laws, financial means, and political influence, this responsibility extends far beyond the provisions that are currently made.

When assigning the responsibility to the EU, I refer in particular to the community of all EU member states. The ETD was a decision jointly agreed upon because individual states felt threatened in their security and sought to restore public order to save the European project (see Chapter 5). The European Commission (2016d) blames member states' reluctance to follow calls for needed support for shortcuts on Greece. Since the EU is a community built upon the principle of solidarity, European states should not take decisions at the expense of single member states without taking major measures to account for all consequences this country is faced with. In practice, this means to provide support to Greece that ensures a smooth implementation of the deal, without additionally burdening the government or citizens.

Individual Europeans play a role in this, as they should support their governments in their endeavour to act in the spirit of collective burden sharing. Volunteering is a valuable way to improve the situation and at the same time take a political stand. Regardless of the endeavor of some volunteers to be non-political and instead provide humanitarian aid (see Chapter 5), showing support

for refugees and spreading information about their plight after leaving the island are contributing to the political discussion. Additionally, considering that values and commitments to the protection of individuals' human rights build the EU's heart, it is crucial that provisions are taken that protect (human) rights and secure humanitarian standards, which exceed what refugees are currently provided with on Chios. It is not only irresponsible, but also fundamentally unfair to burden the international community, the Greek government, or individual Europeans with footing the bill of their deal.

This chapter provided the last missing piece to the thesis of this research paper; Europe's role in the issue at hand. The part on volunteers' and refugees' relationship to Europe paid special attention to the perceived communication gap between people on Chios and Europe, their proposed solutions to the issues, the "dream of Europe" as expressed in refugees' and volunteers' expectations, the ambiguous usage of the concept Europe, and closed with information on Europe's self-constructed and promoted image as value-based entity. This is significant in order to understand how refugees' humanitarian situation on Chios and the ETD's consequences are a manifestation of a European crisis. Then, the second part concluded that the EU should take primary responsibility for refugees on Greek islands. It did so by discussing four actors – the international community as represented by UNHCR, the Greek government, individual Europeans, and the EU - in terms of their means, current engagement and assignability of primary responsibility for refugees on Chios. It concluded that the EU is directly responsible for the refugees on Greek islands since they ruled through the ETD that these should be held there.



## 7. Conclusion

When I arrived to Chios in July 2016, I did not have many expectations. I had been to slums in India, townships in South Africa, and favelas in Brazil. Thus, the sight of people living in makeshift constructions and children playing with litter on dusty pathways were nothing new for me. What did get me thinking was that these camps were standing on European soil and that it was individual, untrained volunteers who were cooking food for almost 2000 people while neither the EU nor the UN or any other actors I thought were responsible for refugees seemed to do much. It is this dissonance between the dream and reality that leaves refugees and volunteers puzzled when they arrive on Chios. In Amsterdam, I had seen more than 100 rejected asylum seekers sleep under degrading conditions in a squatted office building a year earlier. Back then I also could not believe that scenes as we know them from the news in war-torn countries and failed states could suddenly appear in my European neighbourhood. Refugees are special migrants because when they come to peaceful Europe, they also bring war with them through their experiences, their memories, and their stories. They are the connection between unjust treatment or violent conflict in far away countries and European nations that can otherwise pity them from a safe distance. Refugees bring conflicts close to Europeans' homes, which can be perceived as a threat, or as a wakeup call for action.

This thesis presented, analysed and discussed a multitude of issues I encountered on Chios and put them into context. It showed the historic development of the refugee category, how they are different from other migrants and which definitions have been employed for them. It described how I gathered information

among refugees and volunteers on Chios and what challenges they face in their everyday lives. I elaborated on six major themes extracted from the formal interviews, namely bad living conditions, the state of waiting, the EU-Turkey Deal (ETD), the notion of refugees as normal and good people, volunteers' and refugees' relationship to Europe, and their appeal to an invisible audience and proposition of solutions. These themes were embedded in historical, political and theoretical context. Thus, the research also covered van Gennep's and Turners' thought on liminal spaces, which provides an approach to understanding the significance of waiting on an uncompleted journey. It showed how striving for security and order played a role in political responses to the refugee crisis as it was viewed through the lens of international relations theories and Douglas' concept of matter out of place. Finally, it elaborated on the importance of expectations in assigning responsibility and explained that the EU has to assume primary responsibility for providing refugees on Greek islands with adequate living conditions, because their ETD caused the circumstances and simultaneously deprived refugees of the ability to provide for themselves.

After all, major steps in the development of the refugee regime throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century have tended to follow pressure exercised by crises. This is the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II (European Commission, 2015; Kerwin, 2016), which had seen in its aftermath the establishment of the UNHCR and the 1951 CRSR that now build the basis of the international refugees regime. Given that this has now been 55 years ago, a radical revision of the system might have been overdue, in order to equip it with adequate tools to tackle new phenomena arising from new contexts. It is up to the EU with its member states and citizens to

either emerge strengthened from the crisis or to continue sweeping the value-based community's crumbling facade under the carpet. The former would entail to address the current refugee regime's weaknesses, the latter to continue hiding refugees on far-flung islands at the periphery of the EU.

I opened this research with a quote by Omar, a 17-year old Kurdish Syrian who wanted to go to his uncle in Germany. He came to Chios with his mother and two younger brothers after his father had been killed by a bomb and they did not see any future for themselves in Turkey. I close this research's conclusion with a quote by Omar, a 17-year old refugee who has been living in a squatted school in Athens for the last three months; waiting for an interview appointment. He was told his family would receive asylum in Greece. As soon as they receive their travel documents, they want to book a flight to Germany and reapply for asylum there. This is what he said, directly looking into the camera, before he buried his face in his hands and I stopped recording (personal communication A.1, July 20, 2016):

*And I hope someone there in Europe could listen to this and hear us; we are human, [and] need your help. We are human, not terrorists, not anything. We escaped from war, to another war. Save us. Please.*

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## Appendix C: Maps

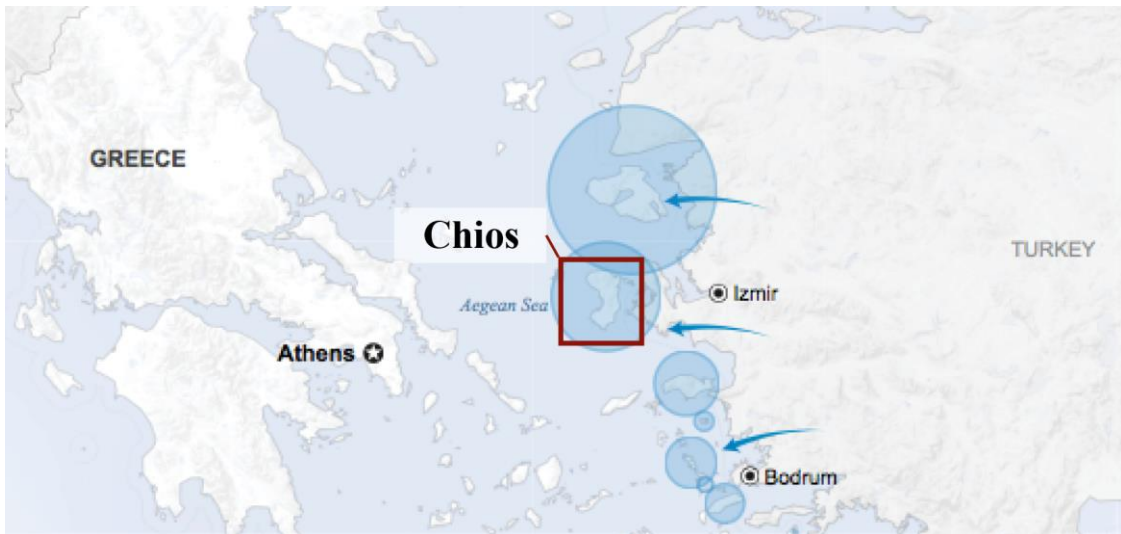


Figure 1. Main islands of arrival for refugees crossing the sea from Turkey to Greece. Adapted from UNHCR (2016a).

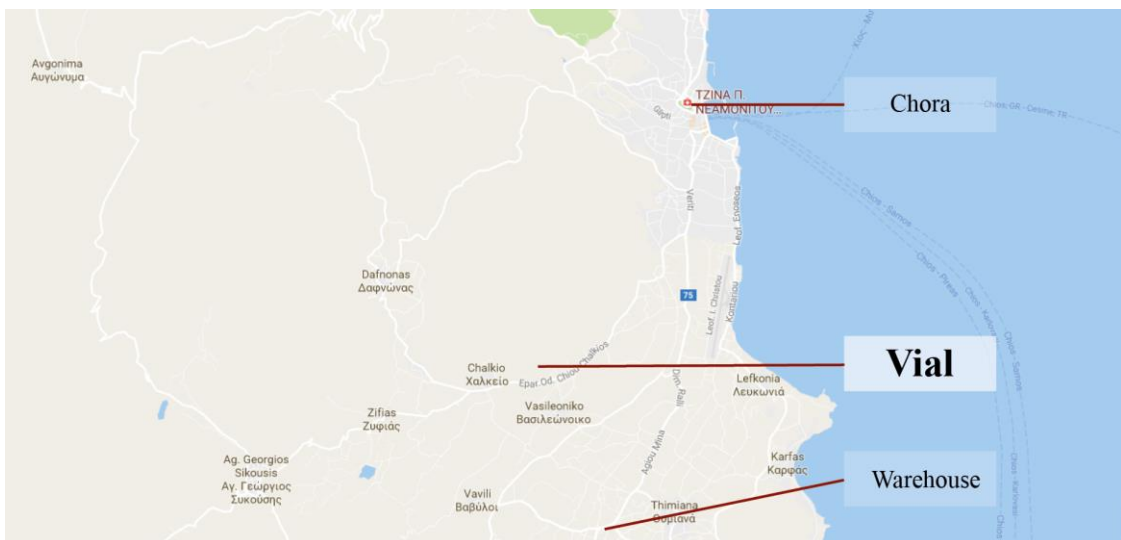


Figure 2. Vials' location on Chios and CESRT's Warehouse (scale in miles: 1:1). Adapted from maps.google.com.

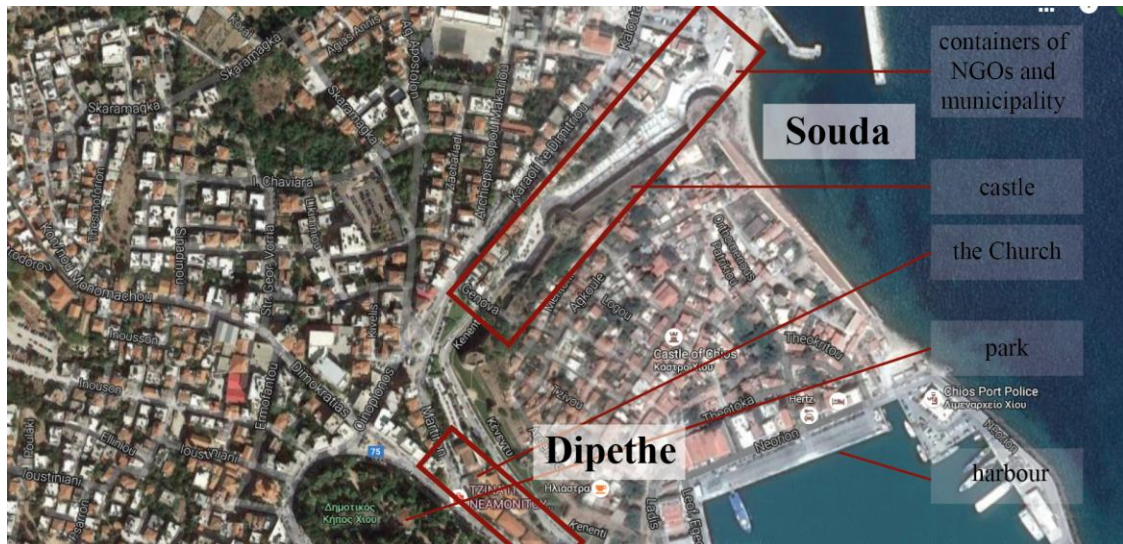


Figure 3. Souda's and Dipethe's location in Chora and important landmarks mentioned in text (scale in feet: 1:200). Adapted from maps.google.com.