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MM &D

An Asylum Seeker's Time between Being a "Refugee" and a "Migrant"[1]

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to investigate the asylum process based on the experiences of asylum seekers. Two axes of the asylum procedure are examined: a) the interview and b) the decisions produced by the asylum committees on the requests. The text argues that, in order to understand the construction of the category of asylum seekers on the one hand and the institutional practices and forms of their control and management on the other, these two dimensions should be considered together. The interview process is based on the articulation of speech, while the decision constitutes an element of a written text document. Since there is no decision without the interview, the objective is to trace the practices and methods through which the meaning of the text of the decision is produced and the form of the speech narrative that asylum seekers are required to deliver in front of asylum committees. The research took place in Athens ,Greece, from January 2018 until July 2019.

Introduction

The present article is part of my PhD research and focuses on two ethnic groups in Athens, namely Afghan and Pakistani asylum seekers. The research has been qualitative and participatory, based on ethnographic methods, narrative approaches and the analysis of official documents. The research took place in Athens, after the EU-Turkey agreement, in a self-organized squat that housed asylum seekers. The research lasted eighteen months, from the beginning of 2018 until the closure of the occupation in

July 2019. My involvement as a volunteer in the field was instrumental in gaining access to primary material. The main interlocutors were two groups of Afghan and Pakistani male asylum seekers living in the occupation, with whom daily contact and connection had been established. Specifically, there were six young men from Pakistan and eight from Afghanistan. During this time, I followed the progress of their asylum application process. Key parts of the material I wrote down during the interview comprised the text of the decision of the asylum committee on the application.

This article (since it does not approach the issue from a legal perspective) avoids focusing on the legal aspects of the asylum procedure and going into specific provisions of the law that determine the policy of the procedure. For asylum seekers, the process of applying for asylum involves many different dimensions with an emphasis on the legal aspect of the process. The broader legal apparatus that concerns asylum seekers, which has developed over the last sixty to seventy years, has become an important component of the legal system (Malkki 1995). Because of their position, asylum seekers are perceived as victims in a state of turmoil who are therefore in need of intervention and "treatment". On this point, there is a tendency to compare the "refugee" to a situation or body that Turner (1967, 88-111) calls "between and betwixt"[i], between those who are and are not entitled to asylum, which only reinforces their sense of uncertainty (Kristen 2015). It was especially after the signing of the EU-Turkey Statement[ii] in March 2016, that the role of both local (state) and European level migration control and surveillance mechanisms became unambiguous. This was a crucial period for the strategic subsumption of population flows within the asylum process, which contributed to extensive geographical control of people on the move and activated a large corps of volunteers and humanitarian organizations (Papataxiarchis 2016, 2017).

The subject matter here concerns the influence of state policy upon people's daily lives when they find themselves face to face with employees from the Asylum Service. That is why it is important to analyze and understand how state institutions filter asylum claims in a manner which can lead to the victimization of asylum seekers. Such a spirit governs the Asylum Service's decisions in the first instance as well as the actions of the civil servants in the Appeals Committees. Thus, the image of the asylum seeker is constructed through the official interview process. The meaning given to their account is central, as is the complex relationship that develops over the course of the interview between the asylum seeker and the case manager. Moreover, an essential factor for the research to consider was the way in which asylum seekers experience the interview in terms of their emotional reactions, their degree of preparedness, the anxieties that haunt them and the conclusions they ultimately draw about the whole process.

In this article, the investigation of the asylum procedure is examined with reference points a) the interview and b) the decisions produced by the asylum committees on the requests. This article supports the position that in order to understand the social construction of the category of asylum seekers and the institutional practices and forms of control and management of them, they should be considered together. The interview process is based on the articulation of speech, while the decision constitutes an element

of a written text document. Since there is no decision without the interview, i.e. without the articulation of speech by the asylum seekers, the objective is to reveal through which practices and methods the meaning of the text of the decision is produced. In addition, we are interested in the form of speech/narratives expressed by asylum seekers, knowing in advance that the environment of the interview is considered by them as unfriendly. Thus, what is being considered for investigation is the way in which a decision is produced, structured and supported, not based on the shape and form of the document, but rather on the evidence-based practices that are invoked through the text for the production of the decision. From this perspective, the document is not perceived as a simple tool of bureaucratic organization, but as "a component of bureaucratic rules, ideologies, knowledge, practices, subjectivities and results" (Hull. S. M 2012).

In Greece, before and after 2015, there have been studies that highlight the importance of documents as forms of control and bureaucratic management of asylum seekers. Specifically, for asylum seekers, legal advice and support were key in preparing them for the interview process. It goes without saying even during periods in which practically no claims to asylum were being granted, claimants were still subjected to the ordeal of bureaucratic processes. In the context of the overall process, the issuance of the asylum card (pink card) was essential (Cabot 2012). However, given that it was neither a residence permit nor an asylum card, in practice, the pink card, which was associated with ambiguity and a state of limbo, served to render asylum seekers' ineligible. Also, for the mobile populations arriving at the Aegean islands en masse from 2015 onwards, the registration and issuance of a simple document was a basic requirement for anyone wishing to leave the island for the mainland. The document (harti), was issued by the port authorities of the islands and was a basic administrative document, although its validity was often disputed by government officials (Rozakou 2017).

This article seeks to contribute to a discussion which, through the analysis of speech and documentation, penetrates into the invisible practices of the asylum process and renders visible the scale of bureaucratic control and management and the construction of the category of asylum seekers. The article does not deal with the humanitarian management of asylum seekers, such as those living in camps. Rather, it focuses on those living within the urban fabric of the city. The first axis of the article engages an anthropological approach through an emic perspective. It analyzes the narratives produced by asylum seekers when they find themselves in front of the asylum committee, and the impacts of the eventual outcome. The second axis is related to the text/decision production process itself and the political weight it carries precisely because it embodies a discourse of management and control – and this is revealed through the analysis of the text of the decisions.

Institutional Policies for the Management of the "Refugee Crisis"

The criteria that define and determine the attainment of refugee status for a person are best understood from a historical point of view. The definition of "refugee" was

established in such a way as to protect those people who left the Eastern bloc, thus setting up a form of international agreement (Karatani 2005). These conditions resulted in the creation of United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) established in December 1950 by the UN General Assembly and which became operational in 1951. The 1951 Convention sets out certain standards for dealing with the issue and for protecting individuals in the countries in which they have settled (Goodwin-Gill 1998, 296). By distinction, a refugee is a person who meets the conditions for recognition as stated in the Convention. The categorization of people on the move as refugees, asylum seekers or immigrants determines the institutional policies and administrative actions that are subsequently pursued in the management of these categories. Thus, the dominant discourse, which is being formed, not only brims with prejudice and xenophobia, which, after all, the exclusionary policies that circumscribe the granting of asylum also entail, but also according to Whittaker (2006, 6) encourages "closed door" policies in relation to population flows. In terms of institutional arrangements, liberal democracies have built complex systems and processes to meet the requirements of case-by-case decisions over whether an asylum seeker meets the criteria for being granted refugee status. Constructing the category of asylum seeker entails precisely this kind of extensive policy formation and action on a practical and theoretical level. There is, indeed, a governing logic that the majority of asylum seekers are taking advantage of the generosity of host countries (Gibney 2004, 10). This fact is indicative of the wider restructuring of state governance in a global context that is characterized by the displacement or dismantling of territorial integrity (Square 2009, 56). The above policies, both at the level of states and the European Union, constitute one side of the coin and control the flow of uprooted or displaced people. The other side is directly linked to border security policies and the implementation of strategies to "filter" refugee/immigrant flows. According to De Genova (2015) the migrants are considered "illegal" once the legislature classifies them as illegal or illegalizes them. From this point of view, a body of illegal immigrants is produced and constructed through the legal discourse. Such a policy had an impact on the transformation of the Italian reception system (Campesi 2018), and apart from the geographical and legal constraints, the prevailing asylum policies form a field characterized by policies of protection and non-freedom at the same time. Seeking protection is considered a voluntary act in a regime that empowers itself to decide and dispose of "refugees" as asylum seeker applicants (De Genova, Garelli and Tazzioli 2018). In particular, European border policies are based on the development of technology for their effective control. Control generates and establishes forms and tactics of visibility that take place within the field of mechanisms and migration management, taking into account visibility as a technique for controlling the migration flows and as a strategy driven by the immigrants themselves, who oscillate between visibility and invisibility (Tazzioli and Waters 2016). The analysis of forms and practices of restriction is directly related to the Hotspots approach[iii]. Tazzioli and Garelli (2018) have analyzed in Greece and Italy the mechanisms for the prevention of immigration flows, the institutional channels of mobility and relocation, as well as the internal forced transportation with which the hotspot system is connected and imposed. In this context, it is important to understand the logic of classifying and labeling migration flows and how these labels are

used as conceptual metaphors. According to Zetter (1991, 2007) the labelling process is key as it is part of policy making. Labelling theory provides a useful tool to observe the bureaucratic procedures and practices that compose refugee identity. According to Stevens (2013) there is a disparity between the "internal protection" provided by nation-states and the "international protection" of the UNHCR's directives, as states interpret their own protection obligations as distinctly divergent from those of humanitarian organizations like the UNHCR. Therefore, what is being implemented is a politics that protects Europe's borders rather than protecting people who are at risk. The service itself according to Jacques (1993, 60-61) is responsible both for satisfying their requests and, simultaneously, suppressing or disqualifying them. According to Stevens (2017) it is this need to appear to comply with international obligations that contributes to the maintenance of an asylum system that at least grants specific rights to a small number of asylum seekers across Europe – as opposed to simply rejecting all applications and fully closing the borders (to refugee, asylum seekers and immigrants).

The Dynamics of the Interview Process

This section concerns the ways in which the image of the asylum seeker is constructed through the interview process. During the interview, the meaning given to asylum seeker's account is central, as is the complex relationship that develops over its course between the asylum seeker and the case manager. During the asylum procedure according to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in Greece, asylum seekers are called upon to "answer its questions with complete honesty, to submit only true facts in full and not to conceal any information related to their application. The submission of false claims or facts will negatively impact assessment of the application". It is through the particular narrative scheme of their testimonies that the law's relationship with the narrative's form emerges (Vogl 2013), given that the latter must meet certain legal requirements, i.e. be characterized by coherence, reliability and plausibility. When the narrative meets these criteria, it is considered to fall within the realm of legality. However, in Vogl's view, the interview process is not guided by a strictly defined framework or specified set of procedures for assessing the quality of narratives where quality is considered a necessary criterion for determining refugee status. On the contrary, it is through the emergence of a series of random facts that the outcome of the process is ultimately determined. Among these are both the arbitrary twists of the story and the beginning and end points of the narrative that case managers expect to hear (ibid., 65). Given the way in which the Asylum Service's guidelines are formulated, one can conclude that for the asylum seeker, the fact of being called to speak constitutes their only tool and weapon during the interview. Their spoken word is thus bound up with their own protection and depends on the degree of success with which they tell their story. In this way, "speech has become a precondition of recognition, protection and legal status" (Zagor et al., 2014, 10).

In addition, there are other factors that determine the outcome of the interview, such as its interpretation. It is through interpretation that the information an asylum seeker

presents for judgment is channeled. Fear, fatigue and stress may also cause confusion or error in relation to various details such as names, locations and dates. Moreover, according to Good (2011), while refugees are being subjected to detailed analysis and cross-checking, the coherence, plausibility and reliability of their accounts become objects of doubt for the Home Office Presenting Officer (HOPO).[iv] For example, officials ask questions about events in the hope of undermining specific answers which appear incoherent, thereby calling into question the credibility of what is being said (Good 2011). Moreover, even the approach adopted during preparation for the interview – a task undertaken by lawyers both from and to a lesser extent outside of humanitarian organizations – essentially nullifies the voice of the subjects in their attempt to represent themselves in the interview. It is because they are considered vulnerable and lacking in knowledge about the system's rules of operation that their voices are overshadowed. This practice only serves to intensify their non-participation in the process (Cabot 2016). Consequently, the idea of the asylum seeker as a victimized subject is constructed, meaning a subject who will always exist in a state of emergency, unable to express their own will whatever the circumstances. In regard to the interview, according to accounts by my interviewees, the atmosphere is one that resembles an interrogation process. A power relationship between the two parties, which assigns specific roles to each, does not cease to exist. For asylum seekers, this power relationship, based on the binary opposition between examiner and examined, creates not only feelings of fear and insecurity, but also of mistrust and the suspicion of being discriminated against. This fact shapes the interview in such a way that it is through the active interaction of the two parties that human stories emerge. It is therefore clear that the interview process as a whole (and even in terms of its aesthetics) is marked by confusion precisely because, when asked to present their life stories, many asylum seekers try to behave as they imagine their audience expects them to (Cabot 2013).

Turning now to my primary sources, I will briefly describe how the asylum seekers themselves experience the interview process and what they think about it. I do so by presenting an indicative sample of extracts from our discussions.

Hamid from Afghanistan, married with two children, states, among other things:

> *I am waiting for the day of the interview. If I get a negative answer I will try to go to another European country. I am very anxious. I can't sleep at night. I'm looking for a good lawyer to prepare me for the day of the interview. They know better than us, and they tell us what to say and what not to say. The important thing is how you tell the story and how believable it is. Everything depends on how you tell your story, how you behave in the room and whether you make a good impression on the official. These things play their role.*

Ali, a 44-year-old Pakistani asylum seeker, said:

> *I was in the interview for four hours. We were all really tired. The atmosphere was cold and not at all friendly. The clerk kept looking me in the eye to see how both my eyes and face reacted. She was staring me in the face and seemed lost in thought. I also kept looking her in the eye without looking down to the right or the left. I had to look determined in what I was saying. I gave quick answers. She kept asking me the same question over and over again. At one point I was asked to take a break and I did not accept. Then she told me that she was tired and we had to take a break. I felt that I was being interrogated.*

Kasem, 25, from Afghanistan, recounts:

> *They ask many tricky questions, that I have to watch out for. I have to beware of these questions, and the problem is that if the interview lasts many hours, then I may get tired and make a mistake. Many of my acquaintances have fallen into a trap. You need to be constantly vigilant and say things precisely. They want a lot of paperwork and that's difficult. I need to find a lawyer to prepare me. I want to be very convincing, to behave properly and a lot depends on how the official sees me. I have to be likeable.*

Selim, 19, from Pakistan:

> *I can't understand why they rejected my application. I had prepared myself very well. I had also gone to a lawyer who had told me what to say and how to say it. The official kept shaking his head as if he agreed with what I was saying, and I felt that I was doing well. They just do not believe us. They think we are lying. They do not understand anything. They do not want to understand...*

In such a situation, asylum seekers are faced with two diametrically opposed options: one consists of compliance as a tactic of adaptation to a system that has rejected the applicant, the other leads to withdrawal from the process and subsequent isolation, since adaptation and compliance equate to rejection of oneself and one's past. During the interviews asylum seekers find themselves in a state of insecurity and fear, as there are many who do not know how to tell their story nor what the worker in front of them expects to hear. Even those who have knowledge of the subject and can maneuver more effectively cannot avoid other obstacles along the way. One of these obstacles is the atmosphere that is fraught with elements of interrogation and surveillance - in the name of searching out the truth - through questions that are repeated over time or purposefully tricky. Other stumbling blocks include the aura of suspicion and mistrust, in other words the belief that interviewees vacillate between truth and falsehood; the suspicion that they are actually immigrants and finally, the practice of assessing claims on the spot, through body language and watchful eyes. In addition, the cold atmosphere

of a formal process and the asylum seeker's unfamiliarity with the worker deepen their bewilderment, especially when the discussion turns to personal experiences.

All of the above are key factors that shape narratives, claims and behavior in front of the Decision Authority. As a bureaucratic mechanism, the asylum system considers that the statements of asylum seekers are generally untrue. Case workers frequently charge that the information that comes to light is inaccurate or that it is a long way from the truth. The former conclusion does not only apply to the personal data that are provided but also people's experiences, and such rhetoric concerns the credibility of claims. According to asylum seekers' reports, the whole process is often difficult for them to be understood. Their accounts, as determinant actions, are examined through the central criteria of reliability and plausibility. The evaluations of their stories may produce insufficient knowledge about their socio-cultural backgrounds, and at the same time they may be obliged to explain some of their choices or behaviours, which to the examiner seems illogical or surprising for a "reasonable" person. In addition, a great deal can be literally lost in translation, which generates inconsistencies and a lack of coherence in the narratives. This feeds into a vicious circle: their stories are treated with suspicion, thereby contributing to the culture of mistrust that shapes their narratives (Eastmond 2007) and their evaluation. The above factors are evidence of a technology of power. The ideas of uncertainty, mistrust and deception are attributed to asylum seekers throughout the interview process, thus constructing this category of person and putting them in an unclear position. These features, which are also evident, for example in the UK asylum system, lead asylum seekers to despair and passivity, to deportation and displacement (Griffiths 2012).

The search for truth is the cornerstone of the interview process. This element shapes specific attitudes and possibly also the narratives that get adapted to the requirements of the Authority that is examining the request. Investigation of the claims to truth occurs through the bureaucratic system, which is devoted to the task. According to Fassin's approach (2013), it is not the truth of the asylum system that is at stake, but the truth of the narratives and this is precisely because the role of the bureaucracy is to detect "bogus refugees". From this point of view, the dominant discourse as well as state (European and national) policies associate asylum with the control of immigrant and refugee flows, which fact produces more set practices and behaviors on the part of the administration and officials. These specific practices concern the relationship between case workers and applicants as well as the interactions between them, which obscures the legal dimensions of the issue. Since the process is based on assessments (which are linked to a number of practices and attitudes during the interview) of the internal and external coherence of the subject's story, legal norms cannot be thought of as simply preceding the results, but are rather determined by the perception that has already been formed about the granting of asylum. Despite the fact that it is described in legal terms, the process of granting refugee status can therefore scarcely be characterized as obeying legal reasoning (Dequen 2013). The key factor is the social construction of the asylum seeker, which is based principally on the interaction between the parties, as well as on the overall structure of the process which allows or dictates specific behaviors and

responses on the part of the asylum seeker. For example, if we did not have the formula of repeated question-answer style interviews, perhaps interview subjects would approach their stories differently. In fact, as it stands, the process, which hampers the expression of interviewees' narratives, is enforced in order to comply with official norms.

Decisions on Asylum Applications

In the present section, I focus on the spirit that animates the text of the final decision. While keeping to the same broad subject, I now shift the emphasis to a distinct aspect of the process: namely, the way the decision is composed and structured in combination with the evidence –based date and references that the text invokes for the production of the meaning. This choice is based on a political perspective and engages with broader critical readings in order to assess the processes of knowledge production and power, on the one hand, and the predominance of Euro-centric resources and approaches, on the other.

With regard to the gathering of documents, asylum seekers could contact relatives or friends who already resided in Athens as kinship and cultural networks could always facilitate the collection of documents – however complex and marked by bureaucratic difficulties. In addition, it was possible to have documents translated by official translation agencies, although this was not a requirement as long as the translation was undertaken by the Asylum Service's own interpreter. However, for asylum seekers, having documents translated by official agencies became a kind of obsession in which they related their need for formality in the face of the Asylum Service and from their intense anxiety over proving their claims in the most "official" way possible. A document is therefore also a contributing factor to the way in which society imagines and confronts the state (Hull. S. M 2012). It appears that asylum seekers both comprehend and reproduce the logic whereby their appearance at the interview is bolstered by the presentation of documents, which increases their chances of a positive outcome.

With respect to the decisions, first of all, one needs to clarify the fact that the Asylum Service is not the exclusive product of a specific national state mechanism. It acquires (and reproduces) knowledge and information that European research centers produce about asylum seekers, the situation in their home countries and the specific reasons they state during their interviews. A careful reading of all the decisions in the first and second instances yields a number of interesting observations. Firstly, case managers, in order to substantiate their decisions scientifically and methodically, drew on information and knowledge from diverse sources and manuals, reports and conferences, or from existing court decisions by other Western authorities. For example, in relation to Pakistanis who cited land disputes as reasons for their displacement, case managers referred to the reports of documentation centers in European countries and to those of international organizations. They did not, however, refer to studies or analyses, published in leading journals, by Pakistani researchers who live and work in Pakistan. Such issues would be more clearly and validly analyzed by scholars who belong to the

same cultural environment and who presumably have a better overview of the culture, gravity, meaning and social dimensions of the problem. Within the European scientific community, specific knowledge about "other" peoples is produced and reproduced - in this case about Pakistani asylum seekers and the importance and scope of the problems in their country. Thus, the various kinds of evidence that Pakistani asylum seekers are required to provide in support of their applications, is then evaluated against the partial and situated knowledge produced by European researchers. It seems clear that we are therefore dealing with Western-centric tendencies that feed into the production of this knowledge, where such knowledge is linked to the institutional marginalization of asylum seekers, and possibly to further repercussions as well.

In almost all decisions on international protection that I examined, one of the main sources is the Home Office's *Country Information and Guidance*, which, through reports published by country of origin, issues guidelines that constitute the data source for case managers in the British asylum system. The reports provide information about the country of origin and at the same time give instructions to caseworkers who are directly involved in the asylum procedure on how to handle specific requests. It is within this framework that the data are examined, and a determination is made about the degree to which the asylum seeker's claims justify the granting of asylum. In addition, following the guide, the reliability of the information, its accuracy and objectivity are assessed using sources that ensure the validity of the data. It is via the handling of this kind of material, and through processes such as those described above, that government agencies supposedly produce valid and objective knowledge concerning the lives, the conditions and problems that people face, for example, in Pakistan.

The above processes can be analyzed through the prism of the Foucauldian conception of knowledge production as enmeshed with the exercise of power. According to Foucault (1991, 101) power and power relations permeate the whole spectrum of social relations and, in order to become stable and established, they need to produce, accumulate and circulate discourse. This analysis influenced Edward Said, who put the emphasis on the degree and mechanisms by which knowledge, as it is produced and reproduced by the European mind, is essentially a form of power that influences and extends to non-European peoples (Said 1996, 348). The main factor that plays an important role in this domain is academic discourse and intellectual discourse in general, which deals with social life and shapes views on ways of living and political systems, views which are biased, derogatory and irresponsible (Said 1997, 51). Following this reasoning, the Asylum Service and those involved in producing decisions about "other" people who come from the Middle East, South Asia or Africa, judge and weigh the lives of these "others". They classify them into categories such as refugee, asylum seeker or immigrant; through the lens of research carried out by a distinct, European service which itself constitutes the "eye of power".

Another interesting element that emerges from a reading of asylum decisions is the way in which the Greek Asylum Service's decisions are structured in relation to the subject's own accounts. Here the issue takes on a moral dimension, given that it concerns the

asylum seeker's credibility. Credibility is tied to two factors, and on the basis of this, the Asylum Service may consider that a request lacks the necessary criteria for reliability. According to Thomas (2006) the first concerns internal inconsistencies or contradictions in the history narrated by the applicant while the second relates to external inconsistencies, that is, inconsistencies between actual facts and objective data on the country of origin, which impact the assessment of the plausibility or truth of the claims. Moreover, according to Good (2009) the process is shaped by specific, pre-existing environments, especially when asylum seekers come from a cultural background that is different from that of the service's employees. The cultural gap between the Asylum Service and asylum seekers influences the institution's assessments of the situation in asylum seekers' countries, and this is one of the key factors that reinforces concerns about the accuracy and fairness of decisions. Although asylum seekers are called on to prove the danger and threats that exist in their country, when they are not able to document these with paperwork, decisions depend, as stated earlier, on the assessments of the institutions that produce discourse about the situation in their country. The process of assessing the credibility of asylum claims should not, according to existing legislation, require written proof of the dangers that people have faced in their country of origin. And yet in practice, precisely such types of evidence are frequently demanded, further contributing to the arbitrariness and prejudice that mark the asylum process (Sorgoni 2015).

Conclusions

This article highlights two of the key aspects of the asylum process: on the one hand, the importance and weight of the interview, and on the other hand, the decisions on asylum applications as a text in itself. Analyzing these two elements in combination provides us with fertile ground for understanding the impact they exert and the effects they have on both bureaucratic control and management, as well as the construction of the category of asylum seekers. The managerial role of documents has been analyzed in the past independently of the spoken word, i.e. the interview process. However, their joint examination offers possibilities for a fruitful investigation of the policies of institutional control and management of asylum seekers.

The decision and the interview are two sides of the same coin. The document/decision constitutes the key element, which not only determines the progress of a person's asylum claim but also reflects filtering mechanisms, which are well established and widely applied. Analyzing the meanings produced by the text, we can perceive that the knowledge reproduced about the "others" is biased given the utilization of studies devised by the European scientific establishment, which creates a tendency toward westernization, resulting in the institutional marginalization of asylum seekers. Also, the interview, as a stage in itself, is characterized by a corresponding distrust, which puts the credibility of the asylum seeker's narrative under scrutiny, a fact which shapes specific attitudes and behaviors on the part of the subjects themselves. The asylum seeker, precisely because they are subjected to an evaluation- interrogation,

shapes their attitude and behavior on the basis of the given environment. From this per-spective, the dominant discourse links asylum to the control of immigration and refugee flows, which leads the administration to more evidence-based practices and process-ori-ented behaviors. Rather, the factor that plays a key role is the social construction of the asylum seeker, which is based chiefly on the interactions between the parties. In fact, the methodical sequence of actions followed in the interview robs the asylum seeker of their own narrative and is implemented in order that the "official procedure" is observed (Monnier 1995). The process of interview and the production of documentation are the conditions, within which the category of asylum seekers has been constructed.

The two dimensions of bureaucratic control and the experiences of asylum seekers examined here contribute to theoretical frameworks focusing on the analysis of power and governmentality. While Foucault's concept of governmentality certainly extends beyond the sphere of state power, the research in this article displays that we are still able to detect new practices, techniques and methods for the management of asylum seekers that are at the center of the three main pillars of governability, i.e. economy, police and humanitarianism (Fassin, 2011). This theoretical approach offers a critical perspective on the human experience of migration (Walters, 2015) and sufficient insight into the mechanisms of migration control and management.

Endnotes

1 Turner's symbolic analysis refers to the (liminal) state of human existence and focuses on the qualities of an amorphous and hazy period in which people find themselves in a borderline and marginal situation, where they may be isolated, suspended in obscurity indefinitely. In other words, in a period of "betwixt and between", between two situations - not in any particular status, but rather in a condition of non-status.

2. EU-Turkey Statement took place on 18 March 2016. The main goal of the Statement was to reduce in maximum the number of irregular migration from Turkey to the EU. Some of the action points of the Statement foresees that all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands as of 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey. Moreover for every Syrian being returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled to the EU and the Turkey will take any necessary measures to prevent new sea or land routes for irregular migration opening from Turkey to the EU. Once irregular crossing between Turkey and the EU are ending or have substantially reduced, a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme will be activated. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-eu-turkey-statement-action-plan

3. The EU-Turkey Statement brought a transformation of the "hotspots" on the Aegean Islands and imposing a geographical restriction on new arrivals to the islands. The initial objective of the "hotspot approach" was to assist Italy and Greece by providing comprehensive and targeted operational support, so that the latter could fulfill their obligations under the EU law and swiftly identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants, channel asylum seekers into asylum procedures, implement the relocation scheme and conduct return operations. Also, hotspots facilities turned into closed detention centres. People arriving after 20 March 2016 through the Aegean islands, and thus subject to the EU-Turkey Statement, were automatically de facto detained within the premises of the hotspots in order to be readmitted to Turkey in case they did not seek international protection or their applications were rejected. Available at: https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/reception-and-identification-procedure/
4. Home Office Presenting Officer (HOPO) refers to civil servants of the United Kingdom of the Ministry of Interior who have the competence to represent that ministry during the adjudi-cation of appeals.

5. Fassin's approach is rooted in the operational level and in the tensions between the Geneva Convention and reality. He notes, however, that the tension has been resolved through a paradoxical consensus: the more limited the number of positive decisions, the more the convention's principles are subject to evaluation. In this way, the truth of asylum is established as a social value which is also rare and positive; while at the same time the credibility of those seeking asylum is tested and questioned.

6. Analyzing the interview process in Switzerland, Monnier perceives the interview room as a theatrical stage on which a drama takes place. Every part of the room has a symbolic meaning while all the members involved in the scene have their own roles and places. The investigation follows a standard procedure, in which claims are recorded until its close. In her view, such a context allows little space for respecting the socio-cultural differences between the parties.

7. The primary sources to which the decisions refer are the reports of: the EASO (Country of Origin Information Report), EASO (European Asylum Support Office), the United Kingdom Border Agency, the UK Home Office, the Central Intelligence Service (The World Factbook), the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, the US Department of State and Human Rights Watch (World Report).

8. In many European countries, the equivalent to the Home Office is a specific government service that is responsible for immigration, security and order. The authorities in charge of decision-making are called upon to study the cases on a individual basis. They pose questions to determine the validity of the assertions and whether the claims to threat and danger are well-founded or not. See: Home Office, 2017, Country Policy and Information Note - Pakistan: Land Disputes. London, Version 2.0 https://www.refworld.org/docid/588a0a134.html.

9. The book Η Μικροφυσική της Εξουσίας, is a collection of interviews, discussions and essays by Michel Foucault in which the public house Ypsilon gave the title "The Microphysics of Power".

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