From “overflowing” warehouses to “overspilling” camps: Border geographies of ill-care in Lesvos
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Abstract

Critical humanitarianism studies have traced the intersection of care and control in migration management and containment, and the mobilisation of humanitarian principles concerned with saving lives and reducing suffering in the governmentality and re-production of the European border spaces. Drawing on these critical studies, this essay attends to the containment geographies erected on the frontier island of Lesvos to argue that the chronic suffering evident there is conterminous to the provision of a liminal form of care which, while proclaiming the pursuit of the humanitarian principles, oscillates between violence and relief. The essay introduces this form of care as ill-care and attends to the case of the former holding centre in Pagani to highlight its capacity to sustain border spaces in a liminal state where crisis and consolidation appear imminent, and humanitarian reasoning can be mobilised at any moment to advance and justify interventions for “humanitarian borderwork.” Consequently, the thesis attends to the successor of Pagani, the hotspot in Moria, to uncover the contingent capacity of ill-care to mediate the expansion of its containment apparatus in the adjacent olive fields in limbo of their formal annexation.
Introduction

Recent scholarly work has traced the mobilization of humanitarianism in European border spaces and the concomitant rise of the “humanitarian border.”¹ There has been increased attention regarding the role of humanitarianism at the intersection of care and control in migration management and containment,² and, more broadly, the ways through which it can operate as a mode of governmental reason which maintains as its highest value of action the preservation of life and the alleviation of suffering.³ Despite incorporating humanitarian logics in their government, European border spaces remain highly hostile spaces where human suffering appears endemic. This research focuses on the geographies of containment erected on the frontier island of Lesvos to investigate this seeming paradox and uncover its immanent productive capacity for what Pallister-Wilkins has defined as “humanitarian borderwork;” when humanitarian concerns about securing lives increasingly inform the re-production of the border.⁴

The frontier island of Lesvos has long been used as an “overflowing” chokepoint capturing and disciplining the movement of those who had landed there in their attempt to cross the Aegean Sea into Europe.⁵ From the “overflowing” warehouses in Pagani to the “overspilling” hotspot in Moria, the chronic suffering evident in these containment geographies appears conterminous to the provision of a liminal form of care which, while proclaiming its pursuit to secure migrant lives, it, nonetheless, oscillates between violence and relief. The essay introduces

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this form of care as ill-care to interrogate its apparent capacity to mediate containment politics and geographies in Lesvos and argues that ill-care appears expedient to the humanitarian government mobilised to transform the island into a bounded and, at the same time, ever-expanding waiting and sorting zone for the “undesirables”6 of Europe.

The first section of the essay focuses on the case of the former holding centre in Pagani to argue that ill-care sustains border spaces in a paradoxical limbo where the provision of this liminal form of care creates the very conditions for intervention under the humanitarian prerogative. In a “state of ill-care” crisis and consolidation appear imminent,7 and humanitarian reason can be mobilized at any moment to identify humanitarian causes for “humanitarian borderwork.”8 The second section focuses on the hotspot in Moria to interrogate how ill-care seems to have become the “nomos” of the European hotspot approach to “manage the undesirables”9 and attends to the centre’s continuous overspilling in the adjacent olive grove to uncover how ill-care mediates the expansion of the hotspot’s containment apparatus in its periphery. Following the events that instigated the overspill camp, the essay builds upon empirical data to argue that the sustained provision of ill-care inside the centre generates multiple expulsions in its equally harsh periphery. The graduated informality10 evident in the overspill camp is harnessed to reinstitute control upon its contested geography even before its formal annexation. At the same time, upon its ambiguous illegality, full-blown humanitarian borderwork remains in limbo and the provision of care is highly limited for the hundreds of people stranded

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6 Agier, *Managing the Undesirables*.
8 Pallister-Wilkins, ‘Humanitarian Borderwork’.
9 Agier, *Managing the Undesirables*.
there. The essay attends to the liminal provision of (ill-)care which takes the material form of electricity to uncover its contingent capacity\textsuperscript{11} for a form of borderwork on the bare minimum while sustaining an immanent “humanitarian cause” to further and consolidate the hotspot’s containment apparatus.

The essay builds upon empirical data from preliminary fieldwork in Lesvos in January 2019 and extended fieldwork in April 2019 when I conducted participatory observations, semi-structured interviews and open discussions with people residing in the overspill camp and people working in the hotspot administration and various NGOs operating within or in the periphery of the centre. For the interviews conducted in Arabic and Farsi I am grateful to my friends A. and A. who offered their valuable language skills to assist this research and welcomed me in their homes and lives in the overspill camp. Along with the fieldwork, the essay is informed through archival research in newspaper articles, reports by NGO’s, related legislation and online posts by volunteers’ and residents’ groups.

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“Overflowing” containment

On the 18th of August 2012, a prominent local newspaper in Lesvos comes with the headline story: “The nightmare is back.”12 According to the article, during the previous two weeks, 27 “illegal migrants” from Syria had crossed to Lesvos from Turkey doubling the total number of irregular arrivals since the beginning of the year to 51. This number was low compared to overall arrivals of the previous years,13 but what worried the local authorities was the geopolitical implications of the civil war in Syria, the fortification of the north-east border in Evros and reports that the detained migrants, “being interrogated, spoke about big numbers, especially of Syrians, waiting in the opposite shores ready to pass to the island.”14 In the absence of reception facilities, irregular migrants were arrested upon arrival and detained in police stations around Lesvos. In October, referring to the conditions in the police detention cells, the local headlines read: “’Overflowing with migrants.’”15

The previous Special Holding Facility for Aliens (SHFA) had closed in 2009 after 5 years of “inhumane and degrading” operation.16 The centre was situated in a complex of hastily

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13 Two hundred in 2011 and more than two thousand in 2010 according to statistics by Greek police.


16 Retrospectively, Greece was convicted twice by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) for the conditions of detention in the centre in 2007 and 2009: In 2011, for inadequate care and unlawful detention of an unaccompanied minor (2007) and, in 2012, for violation of the articles 3 (Prohibition of torture), 5 (Right to liberty and security) and 13 (Right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (2009). Rahimi v. Greece, No. 8687/08 (ECtHR First Chamber 5 July 2011); Mahmundi and others v. Greece, No. 14902/10 (ECtHR First Chamber 24 October 2012).

From the beginning of its operation, the centre was denounced for overcrowding, “unacceptable conditions of detention” and police brutality as reported by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman
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repurposed warehouses in Pagani, just outside Mytilene (the capital of Lesvos) and had served the administrative detention of all irregular migrants, even if they had applied for international protection.17

In October 2009, after recurrent hunger strikes and protests by migrants,18 demonstrations by solidarity groups19 and culminating international condemnation for “abominable” conditions due to chronic overcrowding, understaffing and structural deficiencies,20 the deputy minister of Citizen Protection (MoCP) visited the centre and publicly apologised for conditions “worse than Dante’s inferno.”21 In his televised statements, he declared:

“The conditions are hideous, inhumane; they violate the core of human dignity. Under these circumstances we commit, in cooperation with the competent ministries – the Ministry

or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) after its first visit to the site in 2005. ‘CPT/Inf (2006) 41’ (Strasbourg: CPT, 20 December 2006), 31–33.

17 According to a UNHCR report: “While detention of asylum-seekers who arrive in an irregular manner is not mandatory under Greek legislation, in practice they are systematically detained, along with other irregular entrants. Administrative detention is legitimized through the issuance of a deportation order within 48 hours of the arrest, accompanied by a detention order, which is lifted only following court procedures.” ‘Observations on Greece as a Country of Asylum’ (UNHCR, December 2009), 8.


20 According to the CPT’s report after its 2008 visit to Pagani: “At the time of the 2008 visit, there were 720 detained migrants in the facility for a capacity of approximately 300. By consequence, the detention conditions were abominable, with, for instance, more than 100 persons sharing two toilets and detainees having to share mattresses or sleep directly on the floor. Clearly, under such conditions, any attempt to maintain basic hygienic standards and, more generally, to offer acceptable social and medical care, is bound to fail.” (Emphasis added) ‘CPT/Inf (2009) 20’ (Strasbourg: CPT, 30 June 2009), 19.


21 The deputy’s remark “Dante’s inferno” was broadly circulated in the national media and became a marking analogy for the appalling conditions in Pagani.
In a state of ill-care of Health and Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Interior – to upgrade the detention and hosting conditions.  

According to the deputy minister, state intervention was deemed necessary to mitigate the inhumane conditions inside the state-operated detention facility. After numerous reports and international condemnation, the suffering – which he had now witnessed with his own eyes – compelled him to request immediate action. By attesting to it, he concomitantly identified its causes and prescribed its alleviation. With the vilified centre serving as background to his statements, he attributed this outright violation of human rights neither to the flawed and dysfunctional asylum system nor to the recently intensified detention policies for irregular migrants but, instead, to the inadequacy of the facilities – facilities in need to be upgraded swiftly. Rather than challenging the status quo and the policies of containment, he focused on patching and upgrading the spaces of their enforcement. In the name of human dignity, the state had to intervene to offer state-prescribed relief to state-inflicted and state-attested suffering.

The centre’s operation was suspended, and the initial plan was for it to be refurbished and operational again within six weeks. However, speculations regarding the government’s intentions to build instead a new detention centre circulated almost immediately. Two months

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23 ‘Observations on Greece as a Country of Asylum’.

24 In July of the same year, the length of the administrative detention for irregular migrants was extended from a maximum of three months to six with a provision to be extended even to twelve. ‘CPT/Inf (2010) 33’ (Strasbourg: CPT, 17 November 2010), 15. Echoing Agier on a similar restructuring in the French migration system, “this measure can be blamed on the European Parliament’s passing of a directive in spring 2008 that allowed an extension to eighteen months of the detention period for such foreigners (undocumented) in closed centres.” Agier, Managing the Undesirables, 23.


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later, in a joint press conference between the Ministries of Defence and Civil Protection, the concession to use military grounds near the small village of Moria\(^27\) to “tackle the migratory problem and, above all, illegal immigration”\(^28\) was announced. Thanking the MoD for its “immediate response”, the deputy minister of Civil Protection declared that:

“[O]n this valuable land on the island of Mytilene we will lay the foundations for a new model of reception and management of illegal migrants in our country. […]\(^29\) It is not our goal to move the problem to a neighbouring island or the capital. Such was our policy of the past 5 years, which led to the situation as we all know it and, most importantly, to the ghettoization of the historical centre of Athens.”\(^30\)

These plans were not new. Already a year before the “suspension order”, the prefect of Lesvos had stated: “Pagani was adequate two years ago, but it is clearly insufficient with the dramatic increase of arrivals. […] We have obtained the green light for a new holding centre for 1,000 people, but it will not be ready for at least 18 months.”\(^31\) For this purpose, the prefecture had already requested the military site close to Moria in the past; apparently without success until the deputy’s visit in Pagani.\(^32\) Other local officials firmly condemned the government’s intentions for a new centre speaking of the “stigma of Pagani” which had already left a deep scar in the

\(^{27}\) The well-know Moria camp was later established in a different military site in the same area, in the military barracks Paradellis.


\(^{29}\) Here, the deputy minister shares with the audience his observations in Pagani where the conditions he saw “violated the core of human dignity”.


\(^{32}\) According to the deputy minister of MoCP; “I note that this site was requested also in the past by the prefecture from the minister of MoD of the previous government, but he hadn’t consent to provide it.” Ministry of Defence, ‘Joint press conference of the MMoD, DMoD and DMoCP’.
memories and reputation of the island. Eventually, Pagani never opened again, but the prospect of a “new Pagani” was lurking.

Less than a year later, the particularities of this “new model of reception and management” were revealed when the government introduced a bill delineating the full adaptation of the EU Directive 2008/115/EC “on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals” which became the 3907/2011 law that aimed to reform the Asylum and First Reception Services in Greece. As Tazzioli and Garelli have shown, governing migration is not exhausted in practices of out-right detention but rather incorporate a proliferation of ever-shifting containment strategies deployed to disrupt, decelerate and divert migrant’s autonomous geographies after they have landed in European sovereign territories. These containment strategies aim to discipline migrants’ both movement and presence – on a specific territory and beyond – through “effects of mobility disruption, spatial fixation and temporal suspension that are generated through measures of confinement that do not coincide with detention.” Hence, containment, although it can take a form of spatial confinement, it is not reduced to it, but, rather, expands to other forms of spatial,
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temporal, existential and legal entrapments\(^{38}\) “beyond detention” in order to intercept and discipline migrants’ both actualised and intended geographies.

When the “nightmare was back” in 2012, a recently decommissioned military barracks outside the village of Moria\(^{39}\) was selected to be repurposed to allow the implementation of the new legislation and its further steps.\(^{40}\) Initially, the prospect of a new center on the island was met with opposition from the local authorities; a “new Pagani” was beyond consideration.\(^{41}\) However, with “overflowing” police stations in deteriorated conditions and people sleeping in public spaces around the town, a compromise was reached for a short-term registration center.\(^{42}\)

On its premises, the first hotspot in Greece would be later inaugurated.

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\(^{38}\) For example, Tazzioli and Garelli delineate how screening procedures in the hotspot in Lampedousa produced “a large population of illegalised people on the national territory, living in destitution in Italy or across Europe.” 7.

\(^{39}\) The military barracks “Paradellis” was selected as the most time- and cost-efficient site for that purpose, not only due to practical considerations but also because the respective law provided expediated procedures for the repurposing of military sites in suspension of other spatial planning legislation. Paragraph 14, article 8, law 4033/2011

\(^{40}\) In the executive summary of the “Greek Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management” for the European Parliament, the Greek Government delineates the new legislation and its further steps, paving the way for the European hotspot approach:

> “This Revised Action Plan was designed along the following concepts: An effective First Reception Service allowing integrated management of all irregular migrants through screening procedures […] A new independent Asylum Service operated by civil servants trained by specialists in the field with the cooperation of UNHCR and EASO […] An overall management of the pending asylum cases-backlog […] An improved and effective Returns policy […] An effective Integrated Border Management according to European models […]”

Bold in the original. ‘Greek Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management’.

\(^{41}\) Report from the mayor’s press conference. Originally in Greek, translated by the author. ‘We are not going to live the same nightmare again.’, *Empros*, 20 September 2012, https://www.emprosnet.gr/koinonia/37580-de-tha-xanazisoyme-ton-efali.

\(^{42}\) Following the official announcement of the government’s intentions to build a new centre on the island, a closed meeting was held between the Lesvos perfect, the mayor of Mytilene, a representative of the UNHCR, the director of Lesvos Economic Development Chamber, the director of Mytilene’s hospital, representatives of the police, the coast guard and the church which concluded that they would only accept a short-term registration center where people would stay for a maximum period of two weeks. Originally in Greek, translated by the author. Michalis Liakatellis, “Yes” in the creation of a short-term hosting facility’, *Empros*, 21 September 2012, https://www.emprosnet.gr/kommata/37642-nai-sti-dimioyrgia-horoy-vrahynias-filoxenias.
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**Humanitarian borders and the “state of ill-care”**

The state’s intervention in Pagani and its plans to erect a “new holding centre”\(^{43}\) in Lesvos together with “a new model of reception and management of illegal migrants,”\(^{44}\) was framed as a humane response to a violated “human dignity.”\(^{45}\) As Walters has argued, this mobilisation of humanitarian reasoning in border spaces arises as borders become “privileged symbolic and regulatory instruments within strategies of migration control” and a “matter of life and death” for those who attempt to cross them. As such, border spaces are reinvented as a “space of humanitarian government”\(^{46}\) into what Walters calls the “humanitarian border”. More broadly, according to Fassin, humanitarian government can be defined as “the administration of human collectivities in the name of a higher moral principle which sees the preservation of life and the alleviation of suffering as the highest value of action.”\(^{47}\) Following Fassin, Walters delineates this rise of humanitarian government in border spaces not as a specific and predefined set of actors, practises or ideologies but as a mode of governmental reason capable of producing sets of rationalised activities that are grounded in the ethical and moral imperative to offer relief to human suffering. Humanitarianism stands thus as an open-ended mode of action in border spaces, “both within and beyond state forms,”\(^{48}\) which “can be carried out by all sorts of agents, in various contexts, and towards multiple ends.”\(^{49}\)

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\(^{43}\) Refugees, ‘Greece's Infrastructure Struggles to Cope with Mixed Migration Flow’.

\(^{44}\) Originally in Greek, translated by the author. Ministry of Defence, ‘Joint press conference of the MMO\(D\), DMo\(D\) and DMo\(CP\)’.

\(^{45}\) Originally in Greek, translated by the author. Extract from the public television ERT3 retrieved from Youtube: spyrosvougias, *Spyros Vougias in Pagani*.

\(^{46}\) ‘Foucault and Frontiers’, 138.

\(^{47}\) ‘Humanitarianism: A Nongovernmental Government’.

\(^{48}\) Fassin, 151.

\(^{49}\) Walters, ‘Foucault and Frontiers’, 143.
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As Pallister-Wilkins has shown, this shift in border spaces does not simply signify that humanitarianism has now moved closer to border spaces, neither that it has done so only to mitigate the violence that is increasingly evident there.\textsuperscript{50} Rather, humanitarianism “as a rationality of government with specific meanings and values about life and specific practices of intervention and assistance”\textsuperscript{51} reconfigures a range of practices, actors, territories and categories of life through which borders are produced and reproduced. Humanitarianism thus reorients the constant work involved in the production of the border – known as borderwork\textsuperscript{52} – towards the enactment of humanitarian principles and, by doing so, modifies “older forms of borderwork concerned with stopping, defending and securing territory to work concerned with securing lives.”\textsuperscript{53} Consequently, the implication of humanitarianism in border spaces opens them up as territories to be configured or re-configured in line with humanitarian imperatives through what Pallister-Wilkins has called humanitarian borderwork.\textsuperscript{54}

As Ticktin has argued, humanitarianism, in its commitment to the immediacy of saving lives and alleviating suffering, distinguishes itself from the political and appears to be apolitical, while its interventions, nevertheless, reinforce the dominant order.\textsuperscript{55} In its attempt to bypass politics to do what is moral and urgent, humanitarian action adheres to the immediacy of the present and refrains from challenging the status quo, and, in doing so, it ends up reproducing it. Hence, at the same time that humanitarianism’s higher moral order “depoliticizes everything it

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50} ‘Humanitarian Borderwork’, 89.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Pallister-Wilkins, 89.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Pallister-Wilkins, 86.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Pallister-Wilkins, 85.
\item \textsuperscript{54} ‘Humanitarian Borderwork’.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Casualties of Care Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2012).
\end{itemize}
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touches, it, nonetheless, exerts power. This incorporates, as Ticktin notes, the danger that “in pretending to be outside power, ‘unarmed,’ power is wielded without acknowledging it and therefore often without accountability.” Under the humanitarian prerogative, the actual position from which power is enacted can be concealed or made irrelevant, and, as such, used toward various political ends. Appealing thus to this higher moral order, humanitarian borderwork, even when enacted through state intervention, can appear to be apolitical – beyond or outside politics – and, at the same time, engage, reproduce and consolidate the status quo in migration control.

As such, the abominable conditions in the overcrowded warehouses in Pagani provided a platform for the Greek government to advance its intentions for borderwork in Lesvos as a humane response to inhumane conditions – an intervention beyond politics but rather grounded in the moral and urgent prerogative to alleviate suffering. Here, the “spectacular” intervention by the deputy minister in Pagani was instrumental in abruptly reframing the conditions in the state-operated centre into a humanitarian urgency requiring immediate response. Drawing upon the so-called “migration crisis” in the Mediterranean Sea, Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins have noted that crises, instead of moments of rupture, appear relational with routine migration and border politics. As the authors argue, crises not only call upon immediate and thus spatio-temporally limited responses that focus on patching and restoring the status quo, but they also have a performative role in lending their disruptive quality for the introduction of new approaches and techniques that expand and consolidate routine politics and practices. Reframing, thus, the out-right violation of human rights as a sort of a humanitarian crisis, the deputy minister not only managed to deflect the causes of this violence upon failing facilities, but

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57 *Casualties of Care Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France*, 20.
he also capitalised on its disruptive quality to advance the government’s efforts to reorder migration and border politics in Greece in line with the European mandate. Hence, the case of Pagani makes evident that the co-option of humanitarianism’s moral imperative in the governance of borders can lead not only to the nihilation of the political but also to the concomitant instrumentalisation of human suffering to advance state interventions for borderwork when this seems expedient to its interests.

The inhumane conditions in Pagani were, nonetheless, fostered by the routine practises of migrant reception and care in line with the concerns over migrants’ lives that humanitarianism brings to border spaces. As Agier has noted, providing relief to vulnerable populations “incorporates a police mentality of confinement and separation” and this humanitarian couplet of care and control has been integral to the “management of the undesirables.” In other words, upon landing in Greek territorial space through already life-threatening boat trips, people in Pagani were now victims in the hands – and by the hands – of the humanitarian couplet of care and control incorporated in the containment apparatus deployed to capture and discipline their further movements. Acute human suffering was thus complicit to a form of “care” provided to people stranded in facilities aiming to protect (and contain) those seeking international

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58 Managing the Undesirables, 4.


As Jeandesboza and Pallister-Wilkins maintain, “it is European border policies restricting safe and legal routes that leave few alternatives other than unsafe and irregular forms of transport for those fleeing conflict and poverty.” Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins, ‘Crisis, Routine, Consolidation’, 316.


See also the case of the brutal beating of a 17-years old migrant in Pagani the night after the visit of the deputy minister. The case was closed and archived one month later with no prosecutions. Originally in Greek, translated by the author. Alevizopoulou, ‘Pagani, the sinful’; Dionisis Vuthoulkas, ‘In the archive the case of the beating of 17-year-old Afghan in Pagani, Mytilene.’, Το Βήμα, 9 November 2009, https://www.tovima.gr/2009/11/09/society/sto-arxeio-i-ypothesi-tis-kataggelas-gia-ksylodarmo-17xronoy-afganoy-stin-pagani-mytilinis/.
In a state of ill-care protection or simply to be allowed to continue their journeys. I want to call this liminal form of “care” which is endemic in border spaces, enacted upon the humanitarian prerogative to secure migrants’ lives and, nonetheless, oscillates between violence and relief as “ill-care.” In other words, I want to introduce the notion of ill-care as a gesture to make sense of a violence incorporated not in the “Fortress Europe” but under Europe’s humanitarian veil.

The case of Pagani shows that ill-care appears instrumental in migration and border politics in its capacity to advance and justify interventions for humanitarian borderwork premised on a concern to secure rather than police migrant lives. Ill-care maintains border spaces in a paradoxical limbo where the provision of liminal and ambiguous relief sustains the very conditions upon which humanitarian reason can be mobilized at any moment to identify humanitarian causes for intervention. In a state of ill-care, the moral order of humanitarianism remains – by necessity if not by design – the higher order of action and, as such, interventions appear apolitical, reduced to the urgent and immediate, while, nonetheless, engaging and reproducing the status quo. To put it differently, ill-care sustains border spaces in a liminal condition where crisis and consolidation appear immanent. Thus, the case of Pagani indicates that human suffering evident in the “sorting centres” erected to contain the “undesirables” of Europe cannot be understood simply as a failure or a paradox of the humanitarian border. Instead, ill-care appears enmeshed and relational with routine migration and border politics in its capacity to mobilise and justify state interventions to expand and consolidate migration and border politics.

61 Pallister-Wilkins, ‘Humanitarian Borderwork’.
62 Ticktin, Casualties of Care Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France.
63 Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins, ‘Crisis, Routine, Consolidation’.
64 Agier, Managing the Undesirables.
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The following section turns to the “new Pagani,” the hotspot in Moria, to interrogate how ill-care mediates the containment apparatus erected in Lesvos after the implementation of the “European hotspot approach to managing exceptional migratory flows.”

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Geographies of ill-care

The “hotspot approach” to care

In October 2015, the European Union’s Migration Commissioner inaugurates Greece’s first “hotspot” in Moria and declares:

“If this had taken place ten months ago, we could have avoided what we went through this summer. […] More importantly, we would have been able to treat all those people who are seeking for a better life in Europe in a more humane manner.”

The EU commissioner was referring to the so-called “migration crisis” of the summer 2015 upon which Europe adopted a “new ‘Hotspot’ approach, where the European Asylum Support Office, Frontex and Europol will work on the ground with frontline Member States to swiftly identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants.” The aim of the Hotspot approach is to provide a platform for the agencies to intervene, rapidly and in an integrated manner, so that “comprehensive and targeted support is provided to the frontline Member State by the relevant EU Agencies with regard to all challenges that arise due to specific and disproportionate migratory pressures at the external borders.” The hotspot approach was thus closer to a “flexible tool” designed for intergovernmental supervision and assistance to control and interrupt people’s mobility for the management and consolidation of the migration crisis.

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The other component of the “hotspot approach” would be implemented a few months later. In March 2016, EU and Turkey released a joint statement according to which “[a]ll new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey.” On the premise of this EU-Turkey “deal” and on claims that Turkey won’t accept relocations from other parts of Greece rather than the frontier islands, Greece instituted a policy of containment which entrapped thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers on the islands until their claims would be processed. From being a place of transit and registration, the EU-Turkey “deal” and the “hotspot approach” consolidated the island of Lesvos in a bounded “sorting zone” for the “undesirables” of Europe in a chronic state of overcrowding.

Regarding the commissioner’s claims for a “more humane manner”, the “hotspot approach” to the reception conditions for all those stranded in Lesvos was vaguely implied in the mobilisation of “an additional EUR 60 million in emergency funding, including to support the reception and capacity to provide healthcare to migrants in the Member States under particular pressure” and the call for “[a]ll actors: Member States, EU institutions, International Organisations, civil society, local authorities and third countries need to work together to make a common European migration policy a reality.” The standards for the reception of applicants for international protection in Member States were, instead, laid down by the EU Reception

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72 As the European Parliamentary Research Service acknowledges: “The implementation of the EU-Turkey statement is closely linked to the implementation of the hotspot approach in Greece.” Maria Margarita Mentzelopoulou and Katrien Luyten, ‘Hotspots at EU External Borders: State of Play’ (European Parliamentary Research Service, June 2018), 4.

73 ‘EU-Turkey Statement’ (Brussels: Press office - General Secretariat of the Council, 18 March 2016), 1.

74 Agier, Managing the Undesirables.

75 Since its establishment the centre in Moria operates in constant over capacity. See, for example, the daily reports published by the Greek government. Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Information, ‘Information Portal for the Refugee Crisis’, 2019, http://mindigital.gr/index.php/?CF%80%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%86%CP%85%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%BA%CF%8C%CE%B6%CF%AE%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B1-refugeecrisis?limit=10&fbclid=IwAR0kXhB14NYU9Uv66unFptHaQZQODyDydNgCCLbegqev3K_1g9C0JeAWWd&start=0.

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Conditions Directive 2013/33/EC a few years earlier. Greece adopted this directive in April 2016 by law 4375/2016 that resulted in the institution of the hotspots in Greece as Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) and replaced the former First Reception Centre scheme. According to the EU directive: “Member States shall ensure that material reception conditions provide an adequate standard of living for applicants, which guarantees their subsistence and protects their physical and mental health.”77 In Article 18, these material reception conditions are subsequently defined, but, by its end, the Article provides that:

“In duly justified cases, Member States may exceptionally set modalities for material reception conditions different from those provided for in this Article, for a reasonable period which shall be as short as possible, when: (a) an assessment of the specific needs of the applicant is required, in accordance with Article 2278; (b) housing capacities normally available are temporarily exhausted.”79

Hence, not only the “hostpot approach” to care was left vague, but, in a chronic state of overcrowding, the hotspot of Moria could de jure offer substandard reception conditions to all those “seeking for a better life in Europe.”80 The law itself provided the justification for conditions of ill-care, while overcrowding become the new “state of exception”: the “nomos”81 of the hotspot approach to care in Lesvos.

With sustained conditions of ill-care and humanitarian agencies “integrated” in the hotspot approach, Moria through necessity and through design would effectively become a space of...

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78 Regarding vulnerable persons.

79 Paragraph 9, Article 18, European Union, DIRECTIVE 2013/33/EU laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast).

80 Despite the EU commissioner’s claims “to treat all those people who are seeking for a better life in Europe in a more humane manner.” ‘First Hotspot Inaugurated on Lesvos’.

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humanitarianism. In the following chapters, I want to interrogate the productive capacity of this hotspot approach to (ill-)care to erect differentiated and expanded geographies of containment in the periphery of Moria, while leaving intact the very policies of containment.

Ill-care and the instigation of new containment geographies

In November 2016, a gas canister attached to a hot plate exploded killing a 66-year-old woman and her grandchild in their attempt to keep warm inside their nylon tent. The fire that broke out spread quickly and burned dozens of tents cramped next to each other inside the overcrowded centre. Many more were injured while a young woman and her child had to be transferred to Athens in critical condition. Following the incident, people frustrated over the living conditions inside the centre and the slow processing of their asylum requests protested the deaths and clashed with the police. Many evacuated the centre and spent the night in the adjacent olive fields.

Three months later, in January 2017, the death toll of the Moria hotspot would increase even more. In one week, three men died in their sleep during severe low temperatures. “Hosted” in the centre, they had to sleep in summer tents covered with snow and use makeshift stoves to

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83 ‘One Year from the EU-Turkey Deal: Challenging the EU’s Alternate Facts’ (MSF, March 2017), 12, https://www.msf.org/sites/msf.org/files/one_year_on_from_the_eu-turkey_deal.pdf.


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ty and keep warm. The circumstances indicated carbon monoxide poising. Anticipating freezing temperatures on the island, UNHCR and other non-governmental organisations had long urged the government to lift the geographical restriction and relocate people in the mainland. These dire calls, however, had been ignored to avoid putting “the EU-Turkey agreement in danger”.

The afternoon of the third consecutive death, the minister of Migration Policy (MoMP) called an informal press briefing to announce his immediate intervention plan to upgrade the camp and alleviate the problem of overcrowding. He stated that:

“We ought to quickly investigate the cause of deaths in Moria and to take actions that will make the situation more controllable. We cannot disconnect these deaths from the overcrowding at the Reception and Identification Centre.”

Appealing to the “nomos” of the hotspot approach to care, the lethal provisions inside the centre were exonerated and attributed to “overcrowding”. The following day, the partial evacuation of the camp began, and all summer tents were swiftly removed.

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87 This was confirmed for at least one of them by the toxicological test report. The prosecutor in charge of the investigation found that no offenses were committed, and the cases were archived a year later. However, recently, a case has been opened against the Greek state by the family of the Egyptian migrant. Originally in Greek, translated by the author. Yiannis Papadopoulos, ‘Seeking justice for the death in Moria’, Kathimerini, 25 November 2018, Online edition edition, http://www.kathimerini.gr/&id=96838.

88 See for example the press briefing by UNCHR on the 6th of January: “UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is today reiterating its call to accelerate the moving of asylum-seekers from the Aegean islands to the Greek mainland. Even with recent efforts to improve matters, conditions at many sites on the islands remain very poor. The need for better protection will become all the more acute this weekend when temperatures on the islands are expected to drop. We are worried.”

89 In the words of the MoMP. See below p. 24.


91 Papadopoulos, ‘One Week, Three Deaths in Moria, No Accountability’.

previously occupied by the tents, construction works would soon begin for the installation of prefabricated housing units to refurbish the centre and increase its formal capacity. The geographical restriction was, nonetheless, left intact. The eight hundred people who evacuated Moria remained on the island and, as a temporary solution, they were relocated in short-leased hotels, the municipal refugee camp of Kara-Tepe and a navy vessel stationed in the port of Mytilene.\footnote{According to the state news agency, 420 people were transferred to short-leased hotels, 300 to the municipal camp of Kara-Tepe and 50 to a navy vessel stationed in the port of Mytilene already hosting other 150 people. ‘Decongestion operation of Moria camp’.}

The day after announcing his immediate intervention plan, the MoMP visited the island to oversee its implementation. In his televised statements in front of some newly installed shelters, he stated:

“This someone could ask – and it would be a rightful question – why these endeavors take place now and not twenty days earlier. The answer that I can give is that twenty days ago we had a very big opposition to use other spaces in order to decongest the area so that the construction works could begin. […] As you know, that’s something we’ve been trying since September. […] We couldn’t start earlier because the plan was there, but the space wasn’t.

[...] As for the decongestion of the island, as I have said already, last month we moved 750 people to the mainland. We continue our efforts to move those who can be moved to the mainland without jeopardizing the EU-Turkey agreement. That’s for the best of the island and of the people. We cannot make transfers which will put the EU-Turkey agreement in danger.”\footnote{Originally in Greek, translated by the author. Extract from the public television retrieved from Youtube: Yiannis Mouzalas statements in Moria 01-02-2017 (Moria, Lesvos: ERT Aegean, 2017), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWWZWZDhiQc.}

In his statement, the MoMP was referring to his visit together with the EU migration commissioner, the coordinator of the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement, the regional governor of northern Aegean islands and the mayors of Lesvos, Chios and Samos to Lesvos,
earlier that month, to closely inspect the results of the EU-Turkey “deal”.\textsuperscript{95} On the side of this visit, the MoMP had a meeting with the mayor of Mytilene to discuss a relocation scheme for those in Moria around the island in order to implement the governmental plans for the expansion of the centre. An agreement couldn’t be reached and exiting the meeting, they stated: “We agreed that we disagree”.\textsuperscript{96}

Nonetheless, the immediate action plan and its accompanying relocation scheme provided the required space and the official hosting capacity of the hotspot increased by almost eight hundred.\textsuperscript{97} As was the case with Pagani, the dire consequences of ill-care neutralised political opposition and mobilised interventions to expand the geographies of containment. Once again, the “ills” of the containment apparatus was attributed to the inadequacy of “overcrowded” facilities in need to be swiftly expanded, and the calls for the decongestion of the island were dismissed. Victims of (ill-)care, the deaths of these five people were used as a leverage to bring forth, consolidate and expand the European “hotspot approach” erected on the island while leaving intact the polices that immobilise the “undesirables” of Europe on the Greek frontier islands.

The ministry’s intervention plan, however, did not only expand the containment capacity of the hotspot but instigated new containment geographies in its periphery as well. The relocation scheme provided for the short-term appropriation of a plot outside of the centre, in the south part of the adjacent olive grove. Eurorelief, the NGO integrated in the hotspot administrating

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{95} D. Avramopoulos: Humanitarian duty to contribute to the immediate improvement of the situation in the islands’ (Athenian-Macedonian News Agency, 18 January 2017), \url{https://www.amna.gr/home/article/139045/}.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Originally in Greek, translated by the author. ‘Fruitless Meeting between Y. Mouzalas and the Mayor of Mytilene Sp. Galinos.’ (Athenian-Macedonian News Agency, 15 January 2017), \url{https://www.amna.gr/home/article/138591/}.
\item \textsuperscript{97} According to daily reports published by the Greek government, the capacity of the camp was increased from 2330 in summer 2017 to 3100 in autumn 2017. Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Information, ‘Information Portal for the Refugee Crisis’.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the accommodation, leased the site for that purpose for six months.\textsuperscript{98} Reportedly, the site would be repurposed\textsuperscript{99} in cooperation with UNHCR to install a number of “heated tents so that the decongestion and regeneration of Moria camp could proceed even faster.”\textsuperscript{100} “[T]he ministry’s goal [was] to transfer there up to 400 people.”\textsuperscript{101} The people who were relocated in other sites around the island were mostly families who used to occupy the more permanent structures of the centre. Being vacant, these structures were subsequently occupied by single men who, for the most part, used to live in the removed summer tents. When families started moving back in spring and since the construction works had not yet finished, five hundred single men were moved in the hastily repurposed plot, supposedly for short-term.

However, when the lease by eurorelief ended, not only people remained outside Moria, but the “temporary” camp in the south part of the olive grove was already overspilling to the north.\textsuperscript{102} Both parts were in dire conditions and in need for humanitarian intervention. The plot in the south was subsequently leased by the Dutch NGO ‘Movement on the ground’ “to help deal with the overspilling of the Moria Camp.”\textsuperscript{103}

“They were placed there without amenities, no sanitation, water, electricity. The situation was really bad. […] The army run the food delivery in a very unorganised way.”\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{98} Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of Eurorelief.

\textsuperscript{99} The plot was previously leased by the Danish Red Cross to host recreational activities.

\textsuperscript{100} ‘Decongestion operation of Moria camp’.

\textsuperscript{101} Y. Mouzalas: Measures for the decongestion of Moria from overcrowdedness’.

\textsuperscript{102} Information in this paragraph was derived from compiled interviews with the site manager of Eurorelief, a member of the camp’s administration and an employee in a kids’ activities NGO who worked on the site during this period. Regarding the “Afghan Hill” information was compiled by photographs and posts in the facebook page of the NGO “Together for Better Days” which was operational on the ground at that time.

\textsuperscript{103} Describing their work outside RIC Moria, on the 7\textsuperscript{th} of March 2019, they posted on their website: “We’ve been present in the area for over six months, to help deal with the overspilling of the Moria Camp. Though our CampUs is in full progress in Olive Grove South, the North of the area is not run by anyone.” Movement on the Ground, ‘Moving Families in the Olive Grove’, 7 March 2019, https://movementontheground.com/story/moving-families-in-the-olive-grove-20353.

\textsuperscript{104} Along with the food ratios provided inside the centre, there is a separate food delivery scheme for the camp in the south part of the olive grove.
People weren't sure if they would get food and there was chaos and trouble in the lines. [...] We picked up on these problems and our first intervention was to fix the food delivery. [...] Organizing the food line changed the whole vibe; people were reassured that they would have food and the delivery was neat and calm. [...] (Seeing their successful intervention:)
The (RIC) administration approached us and asked us to expand our operations."

Through humanitarian borderwork, Olive Grove South was transformed into a satellite refugee camp hosting five hundred people and operating in close cooperation with the RIC administration and eurorelief. According to employees of the organisation, ‘Movement on the ground’ organises the accommodation and manages the space together with those hosted there, but the camp runs under the responsibility of the RIC administration and eurorelief conducts the allocation of people there. The Olive Grove North, on the other hand, remained an informal, makeshift camp, allegedly, “not run by anyone.”

This was not the first time that Moria was overspilling in the adjacent olive fields. One year after the establishment of Moria as a First Reception Center, and while Moria was still a transit space, there was an overspill camp in the same area named “Afghan hill”. A post in the social media by an NGO operating on the ground at the time read:

"An emergency camp is being constructed in the olive groves to offer the services refugees need when Moria's population exceeds 1500. Here you can see how work is progressing. [...] It is private land unrecognised by the Ministry of Immigration and UNHCR despite refugees illegally camping on it whenever those awaiting registration at

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105 Tuesday, May 2, 2019. Interview with an employee of ‘Movement on the Ground’.
106 Pallister-Wilkins, ‘Humanitarian Borderwork’.
107 Compiled interviews. Monday, April 8, 2019. Interview with the site manager of Movement on the Ground. Tuesday, May 2, 2019. Interview with an employee of Movement on the Ground. See also the organisational board laying down the hotspot’s accommodation zones where Olive Grove South is considered one of them. (Fig. 5)
108 Describing their work outside RIC Moria, on the 7th of March 2019, they posted on their website: “We’ve been present in the area for over six months, to help deal with the overspilling of the Moria Camp. Though our CampUs is in full progress in Olive Grove South, the North of the area is not run by anyone.” Movement on the Ground, ‘Moving Families in the Olive Grove’.
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Moria exceeds 1500 people. The owners have kindly allowed this limited development in return for careful management and protection of their olive groves.\textsuperscript{109}

The “Afghan hill” was cleared the week following the EU-Turkey statement, while some provisional infrastructure, like the water faucets installed by MSF, remained.\textsuperscript{108}

Instigated by the MoMP’s relocation scheme, Moria was overspilling once again, and, one year later, two thousand people were residing in its periphery alone.\textsuperscript{110} Innervations to offer relief to ill-care, not only induced the expansion of the hotspots formal capacity but also instigated new and differentiated geographies of containment in its periphery. The following chapters will focus on the informal, makeshift camp in the olive grove north which, allegedly, “is not run by anyone”\textsuperscript{111} and interrogate its contested geography and ill-care’s capacity to mediate this informal(ized) border space.

“Moria no good”: Fleeing ill-care

The entrance to the couple’s makeshift tent is covered with a sleeping bag. The sleeping bag is placed vertically, and its zippers are positioned in the middle of the opening for its two sides to function as door leaves. During the night, the couple fastens the zippers and uses water bottle labels to lace them tight through small eyelets pierced along the zippers’ stripes. Above the entrance, between the sleeping bag and the tent’s tarpaulin, they squeeze loosely a couple of empty bottles ready to drop with a modest movement of the garment. On the ground, a flat piece of metal is placed bearing slightly on the lower part of


\textsuperscript{108} Information in this paragraph was derived by photographs and posts in the facebook page of the NGO “Together for Better Days” which was operational on the ground during this period. The instalment of the water faucets by MSF was also reported to me in an interview with MSF. Tuesday, April 16, 2019. Short interview with two MSF representatives.

\textsuperscript{110} According to the Regional Public Health Inspector’s Report (n. 3123/18.10.18), on the 12th of October 2018 there were 1985 refugees and asylum seekers residing in the olive grove. ‘Public Health Inspection Report regarding the IRC Moria’ (Mytilene: General Directorate of Public Health and Social Welfare, 18 October 2018).

\textsuperscript{111} Movement on the Ground, ‘Moving Families in the Olive Grove’.
the sleeping bag so it would fall if someone tried to step in. A tree branch for protection is kept at arm’s length behind a small cupboard.

The husband stands up to demonstrate their effectiveness. He arranges the bottles and shakes the sleeping bag. The bottles drop making a dull sound: “I hear. I wake up.” Nonetheless, he tells me, they cannot rest. They sleep on constant alert: “like dogs”. During the night, the two partners sleep in rotation in two-hour shifts. While the one is sleeping, the other tries to stay awake playing games on the phone. It was only two weeks ago, on a moonless night, that an “alibaba” – a thief – had switched off the power supply in the makeshift camp and tried to rob multiple tents in the dark; one of them was theirs. The young woman was awake at that moment and saw him trying to enter their tent. The husband pulls down his lower lip and shows me a blister: “Stress, stress.” When I ask them about their time inside the centre, they insist it was even worse. Given the conditions there, their decision to move out in the olive grove is irreversible.

M. and Z. left Iran to flee life-threatening prosecutions when M. converted to Christianity. When the young couple came to Moria, they were placed in an isobox with five other families from Afghanistan. The space was far too little for all of them and M.’s faith made the couple feel unwelcome. To move out from the isobox, they bought a summer tent and placed it in another location inside the camp. Fights brought out all the time and M. was threatened with a knife in the food line. “Police see, but (they do) nothing. When the knife is here (showing his belly), then police will do something.” Inside RIC Moria, they found the same tensions they fled from.

Two weeks after they moved out of the isobox, “Eurorelief came and destroyed [their] tent” because “it was not registered”. Following that incident, the couple decided to move out in the adjacent olive grove. For three months they were living in a summer tent underneath a tarpaulin sheet. They moved in their current makeshift tent when the Afghan family who had built it sold it to them when they left. The young couple had bought this tent together with two other Iranian friends who later left. Since then, the young couple lives there alone.113

Since its instigation, the overspill of Moria functions as a makeshift – but meant to last – encampment zone in the periphery of formal care.114 It is a lasting assemblage of ephemeral structures made of tarpaulin sheets with EU and Hellenic Red Cross markings, reused pallets, tree branches and metal posts.115 The tarpaulin sheets are mostly handed out by NGOs, while the other materials are usually collected from the surrounding fields or exchanged in the informal economy of the camp. Other items, such as nails or ropes, can be bought from small vendors on the street in front of the RIC or from a nearby shop in a repurposed warehouse. Necessary tools,
such as shovels, hammers and saws, are often lent by older residents of the olive grove. All these materials are elaborately assembled into small dwells each of them hosting a single family or a group of two to four single men. The common materiality, shape and building technique give a sense of uniformity in the overspill camp\textsuperscript{116} whose geographical expansion fluctuates during the year\textsuperscript{117} along with the number of the people it hosts.\textsuperscript{118}

Living inside the Moria hotspot is harsh, and so it is living in its periphery. “Moria no good” is a common saying in and around Moria. The physically and mentally traumatising conditions in and around the centre are well-documented by humanitarian organisations\textsuperscript{119} as well as the media. Most of the times, Moria and its periphery are addressed indistinguishably as one, and, in fact, due to restrictions to journalists entering the formal camp, much of the mediatised suffering from Lesvos comes from the living conditions in the olive grove.\textsuperscript{120} According to a recent report by Oxfam:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} See also fig. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{117} See also fig. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{118} According to the official numbers I was given during my fieldwork, \textit{976} people were residing in the makeshift camp on the 4\textsuperscript{th} of January and \textit{172} on the 17\textsuperscript{th} of April. These official numbers, however, are highly contestable. Even the officer in charge of reporting them to the ministry told me that due to understaffing they cannot really know who many people are currently on the island, notwithstanding, how many of them live in the overspill. The RIC administration mostly relies on Eurorelief for such information. For example, regarding April 17, discussing with a representative of Eurorelief later the same day, he told me that around four hundred people were in the makeshift camp at the moment; twice the official number. I only use these numbers here as an indication. Nevertheless, in the four weeks I was conducting field work in April the number of tents to be found in the olive grove almost doubled.
\item \textsuperscript{119} See, for example, the joint letter of nineteen human rights and humanitarian non-governmental organisations, such as Amnesty International, the Greek Council of Refugees and Human Rights Watch, which, citing reports on the conditions in Moria, urge the Greek prime minister to uplift the geographical limitation imposed on the asylum seekers which forces them to “remain in conditions that violate their rights and are harmful to their wellbeing, health and dignity”. ‘Joint Letter to the Prime Minister A. Tsipras’, 23 October 2017, https://www.solidaritynow.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/UPDATEDJoint-NGO-Letter.-PM-Tsipras.-20171023.pdf.
\end{itemize}
Overcrowding in Moria and the Olive Grove has resulted in unsafe and unsanitary conditions. Most people in Moria have access to some form of washing facilities and toilets, but these are often inadequate. In the Olive Grove, people have only limited access to running water, toilets and electricity. The ground in the informal camp is strewn with rubbish that attracts rats and stray dogs. […] Medics have reported recurrent cases of diarrhoea and skin infections because of the unsanitary conditions in and around Moria. This is particularly harmful for the hundreds of children and babies that are currently living there, as well as for pregnant women. […] In some cases, asylum seekers develop mental health problems after arriving in Moria because of the squalid living conditions, overcrowding, and the long wait for their asylum claim to be processed.121

Discussing with people in the olive grove, “fear”, “stress”, “cold”, “hot”, “boredom” were common words used to describe the situation there. The overspill is “all trouble.”122 A young woman in her mid-twenties told me that she rarely spent time outside her tent and that she has stopped taking care of herself in fear of invoking men’s attention.123 A young man told me that he is also sometimes afraid to visit the toilets during the night to avoid fights with other men who might be drunk and looking for trouble.124 In the olive grove “you never know; today good; tomorrow bad.”125

However, even in the face of such hardships, some people were nonetheless compelled to reject the formal provisions inside the hotspot and go outside. For them, being in the olive grove was at least something different from remaining inside. They had exited Moria because the conditions in the centre were even more unbearable, while even the limited care offered there was considered inadequate. Accommodation was crammed and deficient, food lines were long


122 Tuesday, April 16, 2019. Group discussion in the olive grove.

123 Monday, April 22, 2019. In-depth interview with a young Iranian woman. Translation assistance by A.

124 Sunday, April 21, 2019. Group discussion in a tent. Translation assistance by A and A.

125 Sunday, April 21, 2019. Group discussion in a tent. Translation assistance by A and A.
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and tense, medical care was scare and inadequate, and policing was ineffective if not aggressive. Stranded in Lesvos, the “hotspot approach” to care had forced them to seek the lesser evil in its periphery.

Returning back inside was for many almost unthinkable; “Moria no good” was again a common reason. Even the RIC administration, eurorelief and other NGOs working on the field insisted that it’s almost impossible to convince people to return to Moria. According to a member of the RIC administration:

“We are trying to empty the olive grove and move the people either back inside or to Kara Tepe. […] We visit people together with translators to try to pursue them to move, but they don’t want. Especially in Moria, they won’t return for any reason. They prefer to stay out, instead of sharing even a container with others. […] They only go to Kara Tepe. In the beginning, they don’t want to go even there; but if someone they know goes and tells them good things, then they would go. […] Sometimes, I try (to convince them) after it has rained; in case with such circumstances they might be easier convinced.”

Il-care, thus, not only instigated the initial “formal” relocation of people outside of the hotspot supposedly to alleviate its inadequacies, but it also sustained conditions that urged people to “informally” exit on their own.

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126 Cooking and eating together was very common in the makeshift camp. Although people in the olive grove had access to the food ratios inside the camp, they would only stay in the food line as a last resort if they didn’t have anything to cook and their monthly monetary ratio was finished.

127 Many claimed that health care is minimal and unreliable and that: “Doctor only gives water and paracetamol. Whatever you have, water-water and paracetamol.” Sunday, April 21, 2019. Group discussion in a tent. Translation assistance by A and A.

128 Many claimed that the police patrolling inside the RIC do nothing and don't intervene even if they are present to a violent incident. For example, when discussing about the incident with the alibaba in the makeshift camp, I asked if there was an alibaba in the RIC as well to which A replied: “Yes, yes. Once there was an alibaba and I went to the police and he tells me ‘Moria normal’ and he did nothing.”

129 From all the people I talked with, none was considering returning to the hotspot. A lawyer working in an NGO told me that she knew a family that moved back inside Moria because they were afraid in the olive grove and people in the makeshift camp told me about a number of families who returned after being threatened by Eurorelief.

130 I was told that people prefer to live outside than go back in Moria in interviews with members of MSF, eurorelief and the RIC administration.

131 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC administration.
The grim liminality of the decision to exit the hotspot and reject its provisions for an equally harsh alternative is embodied in this double articulation of the phrase “Moria no good”. In most cases, “Moria no good” was used to denote the unbearable conditions people had to withstand stranded against their will in Moria, regardless if that meant within or adjacent to its fences. The starkness of the phrase reflected the crude ferocity of Moria in general; the crude ferocity of Europe’s “approach” to “treat all those people who are seeking for a better life in Europe in a more humane manner.” At the same time, in some cases, “Moria no good” was also used to differentiate the centre from the olive grove and express in a direct way the motive behind someone’s decision to exit the centre. In that context, “Moria no good” meant “Moria even worse”. Forced in a situation where both alternatives are “no good”, some people had tried to escape the “even worse”.

The resort, however, to exit the hotspot and reject its provisions was not driven by ill-care solely defined as a deviation of an otherwise proper and righteous care. In other words, it would be an omission to put the stress only on the ill- part of the ill-care. There is an important distinction in the case of the people seeking a form of relief in the periphery of the “hotspot approach” to care. In the previous cases, state intervention to alleviate the suffering caused by ill-care resulted in the very reiteration of that ill-care. The intervention eventually consolidated its very causes. Despite the nomenclature, the policies of containment and the provision of a form of care which oscillates between violence and relief weren’t challenged but rather reinforced and expanded.

On the contrary, the decision of some people to move beyond the RIC’s fences was also driven by a set of needs and desires different than those which the “hotspot approach” to care

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132 As were words of the EU commissioner when he inaugurated the hotspot Moria. ‘First Hotspot Inaugurated on Lesvos’. 
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seemed to address. For most, “Moria is like a prison.”133 People preferred to stay outside because there they could at least have their “privacy”, their “own space”, it was “more quiet”, there were “no fights”, “not many people”, “no control”, and they could be with their friends. According to a Yemeni man: “In your own tent it is good because you make what you want. They (eurorelief) cannot bring someone else here. Living here, everyone who is inside is a brother. You can smoke inside. You have trust to leave your things (unattended).”134 Another young man living in the olive grove with his parents and sister told me: “At the beginning we were put inside Moria. We stayed there for three days, but when we saw that other people live outside, we moved out. We told no one and no one cared. […] I like it more here. It's quiet here, people only pass to go to the market, but, after 8 o'clock, the market is closed so no-one passes. […] It's mixed here; many ethnicities but no problem among them. Not like inside. Inside many fights.”135 An Afghan man turned his hand and showed me the hills covered with olive trees and the sea in the distance, ”Jungle and Sea, fresh air!” he said.136 Exiting the centre was thus, in part, a practical critique to the very definition of the institutionalised care, which might explain and the mostly futile efforts of eurorelief and the administration of the RIC to persuade people to return from the olive grove. Exiting the RIC was an attempt to flee the harsh conditions inside the centre rejecting, at the same time, both sides of the hyphen of ill-care.

The contested geography of the overspill

Two Palestinian men had just completed the wooden framework of a new structure, and they were trying out different arrangements of the tarpaulin covers before nailing them

133 This was another common saying, stated most of the times as self-evident. When discussing with A. about my research interest in the overspill camp, he told me: “What to understand? Moria is like a prison, people don’t like to live in a prison. People like to live outside alone, with their own family in their tent.” Monday, April 8, 2019. Discussion in a café in Mytilene.

134 Sunday, April 14, 2019. In-depth interview with two Yemeni men in a tent. Translation assistance by A.

135 Sunday, April 14, 2019. In-depth interview with a young Yemeni man.

136 Tuesday, April 16, 2019. Group discussion next to the electric panel.
on the posts and piers. A young woman, with a newborn child in her arms, was giving them ideas.

The couple with the child had arrived in Lesvos five days ago. Eurorelief had placed them in the overspill camp, in one of the tents the organisation sets there. The tent was cramped with several families and the space allocated to the couple was too small. With the help of a friend who was already two weeks in the olive grove, they were trying to build this new structure to provide for them a more liveable space.\footnote{Wednesday, May 1, 2019. Group discussion in the olive grove.}

“When Eurorelief comes to build (its tents in the olive grove), they come only four-five people. When they come to destroy, they are ten-twelve. They destroy a tent in five minutes; the same time you go to pee. […] If you leave your tent – even to go to Mytilene or to pee – and Eurorelief finds it empty (unattended) they will destroy it. […] Every week they come to check and destroy. No certain time; as a surprise. […] They come alone, no police, just Eurorelief. […] They make people afraid, especially the new ones who don’t know. They tell them lies. […] One time, Eurorelief came and told me they will bring the police to move me out. I told them: ‘Bring them’; police won’t come after me; police are here to protect me, not them.’\footnote{Sunday, April 14, 2019. In-depth interview with a young Yemeni man.}

During my fieldwork in January and April 2019, the majority of the dwellings in the overspill camp were makeshift structures housing those who the conditions of ill-care inside the center had expelled in its periphery. However, the overspill of Moria is not merely a self-settled camp. Among the makeshift structures, there were some other tents compartmented with canvases of cloth and cramped with multiple families. These tents were built by Eurorelief.\footnote{In April 17, according to a representative of Eurorelief, three big and seven smaller tents were set in the olive grove to accommodate around 100 people. Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of Eurorelief.}

As a member of the RIC’s administration explained: “Eurorelief sets some tents there (in the olive grove) irregularly.\footnote{The word that was used many times referring to the involvement of the RIC in the makeshift camp was “παράτυπα” which means “in a way that (slightly) circumvents the proper way things should have been done.” The adverb bears a connotation of illegality, but it would not be the same as using the word “παράνομα” which literally translates to illegally. This same term “παράτυπος” is also inscribed upon migrant bodies to describe their status as undocumented border-crossers (irregular migrants) and it is used to replace the more criminalizing “παράνομος” (illegal migrant).} We have to ‘look the other way’ since there is not enough space for all here.”\footnote{Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s administration.} For example, according to Eurorelief: “Last summer (2018), every new arrival was sent...
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in the olive grove. There was no room inside Moria, so we had to move them there.”

The administration itself thus uses the adjacent olive fields as a peripheral – “irregular” – encampment zone framing its actions as “the least of all possible evils” – an inescapable pragmatic compromise in the face of urging overcrowding conditions inside the centre.

At the same time, this “irregular” accommodation scheme instigates its own new “overspills”. In the overspill camp, along with those rejecting the institutionalized accommodation inside the centre, there were those rejecting its re-emergence in its periphery, seeking a more liveable space in makeshift structures away from the cramped tents provided by Eurorelief. Encampment in the olive grove has emerged and is sustained though recurrent instances of “overspilling”; the hotspot approach to care keeps people in its periphery in a constant condition of re-expulsions.

Despite allocating people in the olive grove and considering it as one of the hotspot’s accommodation zones, the administration has not (yet) formally acquired the space. As the representative of Eurorelief put it: “Olive Grove North is in a limbo state and they (the administration) don’t know if they will be able to rent it or not.” Thus, the overspill camp operates in a precarious state of informality. The administration claims that they use the space “irregularly” and have to “look the other way” because the olive fields upon which the camp is situated are private properties leased neither by the RIC nor by any other non-state actor.

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142 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with representative of eurorelief.


144 Even on the organisational board laying down the accommodation zones of the hotspot and their daily occupancy, Olive Grove North is considered one of them, while in the administration office there was also a small sketch plan laying down the arrangement of the overspill camp. (see also fig. 4 and fig. 5)

145 The overspill camp is situated upon three consecutive properties, allegedly under the tolerance of their respective owners who are compensated for the use of their fields. Compiled interviews with representatives of eurorelief, RIC’s administration and ‘Movement on the ground’.
Within this ambiguous and multi-jurisdictional state, the potential for intervention to offer relief in the face of the harsh conditions is highly limited. Only MSF has formally leased a small patch of land upon which they have installed some water and sanitation facilities, while ‘Movement on the ground’ which operates in south part of the olive grove claims that the camp in the north is illegal and avoids intervening: “Up there is an illegal part, it's a makeshift camp. Nobody can work there.” The administration itself offers limited relief through the instalment of three power panels to electrify the camp claiming that:

“It would be illegal for us (the administration) to do many things there; (if so) we could be accused for trespassing. Even that we put these panels was too much. […] We wait to lease the land to be able to intervene in a proper way and make (substantial) work.”

Nevertheless, the director of the hotspot has claimed that the RIC’s operations in the adjacent olive fields is neither illegal. In his response memo to a health inspection report criticising, among other things, the unauthorized expansion of the RIC’s operations (accommodation, electric power provisions, water supply) in the adjacent olive fields, the director claimed that a “broader definition” of the Greek law 4375/2016 instituting the RICs

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146 Tuesday, April 16, 2019. Short interview with two MSF representatives. Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.

147 Monday, April 8, 2019. Interview with a representative of ‘Movement on the ground’.

148 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.

149 This health inspection report was delivered by the Public Health Directorate of the North Aegean Region suggesting the immediate shutdown of Moria as hazardous to public health and the environment. In its findings, the report noted that there was no concession deed allowing the use of the adjacent olive fields. Originally in Greek, translated by the author. ‘Public Health Inspection Report regarding the IRC Moria’.

The shutdown of the hotspot was eventually appealed through the combined efforts of the RIC administration and the Ministry of Migration Policy who dismissed the findings of the health inspection as unfounded. Originally in Greek, translated by the author. emprosnet.gr, ‘The theatre of the absurd regarding the... (in)appropriateness of RIC Moria’, Empros, 21 November 2018, https://www.emprosnet.gr/moria/to-theatro-tou-paralogou-sxetika-me-tin-a-katatallotita-tou-kyt-tis-morias.

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“incorporates the necessary legal basis for the use of adjacent spaces.” The director explicitly referred to the par. 3 of the art. 16, which underlines that:

“In exceptional cases of urgent and exigent need and on grounds of national interest, for the housing needs of the Reception and Identification Centres, of the Open Temporary Reception Structures and of Open Temporary Accommodation Structures, it shall be authorized to change the use of existing buildings, as well as the execution of the necessary modifications, the installation or erection of prefabricated buildings, facilities and infrastructures by derogation from any general or specific planning or other provision.”

Designed as a bounded but “overflowing” chokepoint for the migration routes into Europe, the ceaseless need for expansion is once again valorised upon the nomos of the hotspot approach to care. The overspill camp opens up as a space of exception “by derogation from any general or specific planning or other provision” upon the recognition of the alleviation of overcrowding as an “urgent and exigent need”. Down to each individual tent set there by the administration, its recognition derives from this exigency:

(When Eurorelief place a family in a tent in the olive grove:) “We tell them that this is something temporary until space is opened up inside. When things are quiet, we try to move people back to Moria; but when there are new arrivals every day, (it) is difficult to find the time to work with that.”

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152 However, at the same time the director of the RIC dismisses responsibility for the conditions in the overspill camp. For instance, in late 2017 he dismissed reports of sexual harassment of women in the centre claiming that: “Nothing regarding the accusations takes places inside Moria camp” The overspill camp is not only used to allocate people there, but to allocate accountability as well. Originally in Greek, translated by the author. ‘These do not happen inside Moria centre’, Empros, 24 October 2017, https://www.emprosnet.gr/moria/den-symvainon-mesasto-kentro-tis-morias.


154 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with representative of Eurorelief.
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However, while the nomos of the hotspot may validate the tents built by Eurelief, it doesn’t do so for those built by the migrants themselves. The administration regularly urges those who have moved there on their own to relocate and warns them that it is illegal to reside in the olive grove, and that police will, sooner or later, evict them.

“We don’t want to pressure them a lot. It’s not that we will call the police, but we tell them that it is illegal to be there.”

Such warnings are effective in convincing some, “especially the new ones who don’t know”, to relocate. At the same time, the administration tries to physically remove the makeshift structures as well:

“When a family moves out, we knock the tent down. We have to move quickly. (So that no one else moves in.) […] We spend most of our time knocking down tents. […] We are not forcing them out; only the police and the landlord can do that.”

This ambivalent behaviour has raised fear in the makeshift camp that if a makeshift structure is left unattended, Eurelief might “destroy” it even if it is occupied: “No person in tent, no good.” The administration denies any forceful relocation, but some in the olive grove insisted

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155 As discussed in the previous chapter.

156 According to Eurelief, they work with the community leaders to inform those residing in the olive grove that “it is illegal to be there”. Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of Eurelief.

157 Apparently, the possession of some construction tools is also illegal. In 2017, in a coordinated police raid in hotspots in Lesvos, Chios and Samos, among other things (such as drug pills and forged documents), seven screwdrivers, one hand saw and “other agricultural tools” were confiscated. Originally in Greek, translated by the author. ‘Pills, knives, screwdrivers and… a saw!’ Empros, 30 March 2017, https://www.emprosnet.gr/astynomia/xapia-maxairia-katsavidia-kai-prioni.

158 According to eurelief, the only time police intervened to clear structures in the makeshift camp was when it expanded into a fourth property, beyond the three consecutive ones that, allegedly, are used under the tolerance of their respective owners. Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of Eurelief.

159 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC administration.

160 Sunday, April 14, 2019. In-depth interview with a young Yemeni man.

161 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of Eurelief.

162 Monday, April 22, 2019. Short discussion in the olive grove. On that day, a group of friends were about to visit Mytilene. One of them, though, had to stay behind to protect their tent from “Eurelief”. As they explained to me: “No person in tent, no good.”
that they knew cases of people whose homes were brought down in their absence. Nonetheless, many feel the need to remain close to their structures in order to protect them. Hence, despite building its own tents in the overspill, the administration defines the makeshift structures of those fleeing ill-care as inapt and tries to remove them in multiple ways. The geography of the overspill camp is (made) hierarchised and uneven.

At the same time, it is important to note that the definition of a dwelling as inapt and susceptible to be removed does not derive from its materiality or its capacity to provide adequate living conditions to its inhabitants. On the contrary, Eurorelief acknowledges a certain construction dexterity in those structures:

“Have you seen their tents? They are impressive. They are very good in building.”

Hence, whether a tent – a home – is tolerated or susceptible to demolition has to do with who has constructed it and whether it is patronized by the administration or not. “Without the protection and recognition of a state, and without a territory of their own”, the uneven geography of the overspill reflects the ambiguity inscribed on the bodies of the “stateless” (legal/illegal, tolerated/exportable, passive care-receiver/active care-giver) upon the very dwellings those people come to inhabit in the overspill camp. Recognition is contingent upon a dwelling’s expediency to the hotspot approach to care, and, while the need to alleviate overcrowding inside Moria may formalize the one, the need to flee ill-care may informalize the

163 Sunday, April 14, 2019. In-depth interview with a young Yemeni man, and in-depth interview with two Yemeni men. Translation assistance by A.

A Syrian man told me that he used to live in a makeshift tent together with a friend, but Eurorelief “destroyed” it. He subsequently moved to the camp run by ‘Movement on the ground’. Monday, April 15, 2019. Interview with a Syrian teacher.

164 I’m not suggesting that the representative of Eurorelief implied here that the makeshift tents provided adequate living conditions but that the definition of a dwelling as inapt had more to do with the fluid (il-)legality of the overspill camp rather than its structural efficiency. Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of Eurorelief.

165 Agier, Managing the Undesirables, 18.
other. Formal or informal encampment in the “irregular” expansion of Moria reflects what is and what is not a recognisable basis of action in the face of dire conditions inside the centre.

Reflecting upon the notion of informality, Roy, in her work on subaltern geographies, calls for a productive disruption of ontological and topological understandings of informality arguing that it is essential to interrogate how it comes to reflect power relations. Consequently, Roy reintroduces informality as a governmental administrative device producing relationships between the legal and the illegal, the legitimate and the illegitimate, the authorised and the unaugherised. Under this perspective, the graduated (in-)formality evident in the overspill camp can be understood as an administrative device attempting to reinstitute the hotspot’s governmentality in its periphery. Upon suspension of the juridical/spatial order on grounds of “urgent and exigent need”, the overspill opens up as a territory for the spatialized negotiation of recognition and, by extension, of power relations upon which the order of the hotspot attempts to be reproduced in its overspill. Made incompetent to be formalised as such, the autonomous geographies of those fleeing ill-care have to be subverted to the hotspot’s control, and, as expected, every single dwelling in the overspill camp gets marked and registered. Thus, although an “unofficial/irregular” site, hotspot’s sovereignty is, nonetheless, reterritorialized in the overspill camp in its capacity to give meaning, justify and legitimise its own spatial

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166 According to Roy, in the urban context, informality reflects differences in class power. Although informality is a mode of space production both by the wealthy urbanities as well as the slum dwellers, it is discursively attributed only to the latter whose territories remain criminalized, while elite informalities are recognised by the state as “formal”. ‘Slumdog Cities’, 232–33.

167 ‘Slumdog Cities’.

168 Par. 3 of the art. 16 of the Greek law 4375/2016. Originally in Greek, translated by the author. On the organization and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, the Reception and Identification Service, the establishment of the General Secretariat for Reception, the transposition into Greek legislation of the provisions of Directive 2013/32/EC “on common procedures for granting and withdrawing the status of international protection (recast) (L 180/29.6.2013), provisions on the employment of beneficiaries of international protection and other provisions.

169 The makeshift structures and the tents set by Eurorelief have different markings. (See also fig. 8 and fig. 9)
interventions while delegitimising, through persuasion and coercion, the interventions of those it professes to protect.

Consequently, even before its “formal” actualisation as a full-blown containment site, and while the provision of care is highly limited, control “overspills” to the periphery of the hotspot, and the overspill camp operates not in its suspension but in its deformation. More than an “irregular” encampment zone, the olive grove emerges as a zone for the concomitant, although variegated, deployment of hotspot’s governmentality. Echoing AlSayyad,170 this territorialized ambiguity evident there guarantees the territorialized flexibility of the administration in harnessing the efficiency of ill-care to expel people in its periphery. By subjecting their dwellings under its control, the administration aims to encompass the autonomous geographies of those fleeing ill-care into the broader spatial economies of migration governmentality. The olive grove emerges thus as a deformed expansion of the hotspot’s containment apparatus; a containment geography in-between, not (yet) fully actualised. The limited provision of care stands as preamble to this full-blown actualization raising claims “to lease the land to be able to intervene in a proper way”171 or, to put it differently, in a space allegedly “not run by anyone,”172 to replace the “anyone” with someone not stripped of recognition.

The territoriality and sovereignty of the hotspot become thus diffused. Its hollowed fences stand as a porous demarcation between the geographies of containment in and out of the centre. Between the two, there is no stark distinction; they are both administered spaces but of graduated control. Stranded in Lesvos, people exiting the centre fleeing “Moria the prison” find

170 Reading Roy, AlSayyad argues that state power is consolidated in urban spaces by keeping them under “a constant negotiability regarding land rights, property titles, and land use.” As AlSayyad elegantly put it: “This territorialized uncertainty guarantees the territorialized flexibility of the state.” Roy and AlSayyad, Urban Informality, 20.

171 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.

172 Movement on the Ground, ‘Moving Families in the Olive Grove’.
themselves not only in equally harsh conditions but entrapped in an obscured version of the very apparatus they fled from. In the next chapter, I want to turn to electricity – the minimal and precarious provision of care in the overspill camp – to interrogate how it mediates this new geography of containment; to ask, in short, how electric wiring seems to have substituted barbed wire in the make-up of border geographies in Moria.

Containment by other means: from barbed wire to electric wiring

Ab. adds his fine chopped tomato into the electric pan and puts the lid on. Today, he is the one preparing lunch for the company of five young men in the overspill camp. Intermittent power outages, however, barely allow the pan to keep warm. His bean dish will take time to cook. Power shortages seem part of the recipe. Having a meal on time is always a matter of uncertainty.173

We follow A. to his friend’s structure. He has invited us there for tee. This afternoon, a persistent power outage at a section of the makeshift grid that provides electricity to the structures in the camp has left a number of tents without power supply for hours. The tent is connected to that collapsed part of the network. Despite the outage, our hosts attend amply to their offer of hospitality. In order to boil water for the tea, A’s friend operated his electric kettle at a nearby tent which, at that moment, was sufficiently powered. Later, as it started getting darker and while the electrical failure persisted, our hosts turned on a light bulb which was powered by a secondary power-line connected to a functioning part of the grid.174

Two Afghan men were inspecting one of the three electric panels proving the makeshift camp with electricity. One of them, with a piece of cloth at hand, was moving the cables and the switches trying to fix a “voltage problem.” He takes his phone and shows me pictures of him wearing a mechanic’s uniform in an industrial setting next to large electric panels. Back in Afghanistan, he was an electrician. If he had some “fuses”, he could fix the problem. He had asked for such materials from the hotspot’s staff, but they didn’t give him any. He had shown them the same pictures, but they told him that he wasn’t allowed to mingle with the power panel.175

173 Friday, January 4, 2019. First field visit in the hotspot and the olive grove camp.
174 Sunday, January 6, 2019. Afternoon visit in the olive grove camp.
175 Monday, April 8, 2019. Afternoon visit in the olive grove camp.
Abourahme\textsuperscript{176} and Meiches\textsuperscript{177} provide an alternative account of the emergence of the camp which contests the notion that its essence lies in its juridico-political structure and demonstrate that material arrangements are vital in lending their capacity to the actualisation of encampment. Abourahme not only critiques the failure of such approaches to interrogate, for example, the categorical shift from the virtuality of Agamben’s concept of the camp\textsuperscript{178} to its actuality, but he also questions the very attainability of an adequate understanding of the camp without an account of the “actual camp” itself, of “the various biopolitical techniques and subjectivities implicated with it” and their mutually constitutive relations, without, in short, “the very ‘stuff’ of encampment itself.”\textsuperscript{179} Accordingly, Meiches argues that the properties that differentiate the camp from other institutions of confinement and control emerge from the material components and their interaction in the camp assemblage upon which barbed wire appears instrumental in lending its workable bounding capacity for the creation of elastic and malleable boundaries.\textsuperscript{180} As she argues: “A camp emerges from boundaries, and without these boundaries confinement would be impossible.”\textsuperscript{181} However, in the porous and diffused containment geographies of the hotspot and its periphery, barbed wire and drawn boundaries appear obsolete and rather counterproductive to its insatiable endeavour for expansion. The differentiated containment geography of the overspill calls thus for an un-mapping of its materiality.

As discussed in the previous chapters, overt interventions to offer relief in the face of the harsh conditions evident in the olive grove are restricted. Upon its ambiguous state of illegality,

\textsuperscript{176} ‘Assembling and Spilling-Over’.
\textsuperscript{177} ‘A Political Ecology of the Camp’.
\textsuperscript{178} ‘The Camp as the “Nomos” of the Modern’.
\textsuperscript{180} According to Meiche, the distinctive characteristics of the camp are speed, concentration, and the creation of elastic, malleable boundaries which derive from the conjunction of the transport system’s increased capacity to support vast energy sinks, the shift in colonial warfare to displace and manage populations and the barbed wire’s malleable bounding capacity. ‘A Political Ecology of the Camp’.
\textsuperscript{181} Meiches, 486.
NGOs, such as ‘Movement on the ground’, refrain to intervene, and only MSF has installed a few water and sanitation facilities on a small piece of land that they lease in the olive fields. The only infrastructural intervention by the hotspot’s administration is the instalment of three electric panels\(^\text{182}\) for the liminal and precarious (as we will see) provision of electricity – two upon the MSF’s sanitation container and one upon an olive tree.\(^\text{183}\) Upon the three panels, a makeshift electric grid has evolved that extends throughout the whole geography of the olive grove camp distributing along its flimsy cables electric power to the dwellings found there. Electricity is thus the material form of the institutional intervention in the olive grove camp or, to put it differently, electric power materializes the hotspot’s provision of (ill-)care in its periphery.

The three electric panels were installed in spring 2018 when the “relocation scheme” advanced by the MoMP was already spilling over in the part of the olive grove “not run by anyone.”\(^\text{184}\) The introduction of electricity was described by a representative of the RIC’s technical department as a liminal act of transgression of the law which goes “beyond our reach”\(^\text{185}\) but was, nonetheless, well-meant and necessary:

“We don’t have any jurisdiction there. […] Unofficially (referring to the installation of the panels), but anyway, just for them (the people living in the olive grove) not to throw cables over the fences. […] We installed them just for the people to have light and a socket to charge their phones; not to cook, as they do now.”\(^\text{186}\)

The instalment of the panels falls thus upon the ambiguous lines of illegality that map out the geography of the overspill and plays upon the “in-limbo” script, in suspense of a more full-blown action awaiting its formal annexation. However, although rudimentary, this intervention

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\(^{182}\) Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.

\(^{183}\) See for example fig. 11 and fig. 12.

\(^{184}\) Movement on the Ground, ‘Moving Families in the Olive Grove’.

\(^{185}\) Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.

\(^{186}\) Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.
was a material gesture indicating the administration’s patronage over the overspill camp and stands as an explicit precedent of its intentions to provide relief to those residing there. In other words, the panels recast the premise of the administration’s operations in the olive fields. While setting tents in the olive grove was presented as a necessary evil to alleviate overcrowding inside the centre, the introduction of electricity was framed as an act of compassion to alleviate the deprivation associated with encampment outside of the centre, disregarding, at the same time, how the two are connected. The administration can thus claim that its operations in the olive grove are not to compensate for the hotspot’s inadequacies but, rather, to offer a form of relief to those residing adjacent to its fences. Upon the panels, the expansion of the administration’s operations in the hotspot’s periphery thickens its “symbolic mantle of humanitarian reason,” and humanitarianism emerge ratified as the primary mode of such actions. Through this further entanglement with humanitarian logics, the overspill camp is made open to full-scale co-option and infiltration, and the case for an urgent intervention will be made not upon the failures of the hotspot approach, but rather upon the urgency to offer relief to the hardships of encampment “beyond [hotspot’s] reach.”

However, since their introduction, the electric panels and this form of care – meant to be minimal, just “to charge their phones” – has acquired a life of its own in the olive fields. Following Abourahme’s example, I would like to attend to electricity as “both object and process” in order to uncover its contingent agentic capacity and, by extension, the contingent

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188 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.
189 Attending to cement’s introduction and increased accessibility in the Palestinian refugee camp of Deheishe, Abourahme manages to delineate how the camp and the refugeehood, not only as topologies but also as discursive categories, were constantly being made and remade through this otherwise mundane material. His approach goes beyond a search for symbolic significance to grasp cement in its actuality as building material able to act as a mediator of human activity, able to facilitate or disrupt associations and political claims. ‘Assembling and Spilling-Over’.
190 203.
agentic capacity of ill-care – materialised in the case of Moria as electrical current – to mediate the contested geography of the overspill. If the previous chapters interrogated the capacity of ill-care to mediate migration politics in order to consolidate and expand the spaces of their enforcement, this last chapter attempts a redistribution of the political to interrogate the actual-exercised capacity of ill-care – as it is manifested in the now and here of the overspill camp – to assemble a geography of differentiated containment beyond external power impositions that predestine and determine its actualisation.\textsuperscript{191} In other words, if until now I attended to ill-care as a technology of humanitarian government in its latent efficacy to advance governmental\textsuperscript{192} interventions in border spaces, I seek now to expand my analysis and attend to ill-care as a vital actant in humanitarian borders in itself. In my analysis, I follow Bennet who argues that anthropocentric tendencies in theorizing agency “understate the ontological diversity of actants”\textsuperscript{193} and fail to account their full agentic potential in human-non-human assemblages and, thus, whenever a kind of “vitality” is acknowledged, it is “nervously referred back to its origins in persons.”\textsuperscript{194} In the time and space remaining to this essay, I want to apply a different cartography upon the overspill camp to uncover the “vitality” of ill-care as such.

Upon the introduction of the panels in the olive grove, a makeshift grid has evolved around them distributing electricity throughout the whole geography of the overspill camp. Through wires, plugs, sockets, and flimsy connections, electric power is transmitted from olive tree to olive tree reaching even the most remote structures. Dwellings in the olive grove are connected


\textsuperscript{192} As addressed by Fassin, beyond the dichotomy of state – non-state. ‘Humanitarianism: A Nongovernmental Government’.


\textsuperscript{194} 455.
either directly to the panels or to other nearby tents which act as intermediate substations when there is no free socket on the panels, or the panels are too far for a direct connection. Arranging where a makeshift structure will plug in is almost as essential as finding a spot to build it.\textsuperscript{195} Along with the tarpaulin sheets, the wooden pallets and the other building material, electric wiring has become an essential constituent of a makeshift structure’s assemblage. The geography of the overspill emerges thus as a geography of conductors and connectors. Its boundaries are fluid, constantly being reworked, expanding and contracting upon electric wiring.

Through this makeshift grid, electricity in the olive grove opens up as a malleable resource for people to utilise in different ways lending its capacity to power appliances necessary to meet basic needs of encampment life in the periphery of the hotspot’s provisions. Its emergence as an important actant mediating the life of those who, stranded in Lesvos, find themselves living in the olive fields reveals more about their overall deprivation rather the efficacy of electricity per se. Whether one can cook, charge a phone, have light in the dark or enough warmth to sleep at night is contingent upon the capacity of the grid to fulfil these, otherwise mundane, necessities. Lamps, electric heaters, cooking pans, water boilers, cell-phone chargers and electric shavers are common equipment of the makeshift structures, and some of them, like the cooking pans, are usually commonly owned and shared between two or more dwellings.\textsuperscript{196} Expelled and stranded in the olive grove makes electricity a vital mediator facilitating a form of self-reliance away from the formal provisions offered inside the centre. For instance, even though people living there have access to the food ratios distributed inside the hotspot, cooking for each other and sharing meals was a typical practice among families and groups of friends to avoid the tensions and

\textsuperscript{195} In the building sites I visited during my fieldwork in April, it was already arranged where the new structure would connect, and someone would point me either to the panels or a nearby tent.

\textsuperscript{196} These appliances are bought either from Mytilene, small street vendors outside and inside the RIC or sometimes together with the tent when someone sells it before moving from the olive grove.
exhaustion in the food lines. The makeshift grid is thus not only crucial in allowing the overspill camp to expand spatially beyond the RIC but also to exist – to a certain extent – “independent” from the provisions offered inside it.

The panels, however, are powered by one of the two main power sources that electrify the RIC. They are not independent power stations but rather distribution substations subtracting energy from the centre. Planned with an operational output capacity to support facilities with half of their actual occupancy, the hotspot’s power sources are inadequate to meet even the energy demands of the centre alone. The panels receive thus their energy supply by putting extra load to the finite and already deficient power grid of the hotspot.

Hence, the introduction of electricity in the olive grove was, as meant to be, minimal and precarious. The output capacity of the electric panels is barely sufficient to support the energy demands for the hundreds of people that depend on it, and the overspill camp suffers from recurrent power outages. People have organised themselves around this limited resource in order to circumvent and mitigate its inefficiencies. To build resilience against the recurrent outages, the makeshift grid incorporates secondary connections that distribute electricity divergently when a part of it is off power, and customary rules regulating the use of electricity, such as the use of only one heating device per dwelling, are in place. At the same time, many pay regular visits to the panels in order to work around problems when outages occur. Nonetheless, the limited power supply sets pragmatic limits to the extent of its utilisations and,

197 Groceries for cooking have become locally available and can be bought from a nearby warehouse repurposed into a market or street vendors selling fruits and vegetables out of cars, small vans and pickup tracks.

198 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.

199 I observed and I’ve been told about the recurrent power outages during both my filed work periods in January and April 2019. The power outages are so regular that people seemed weary of them, and, most of the times, they were met with comments of dismissal.

200 Sunday, April 14, 2019. In-depth interview with a young Yemeni man.
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as such, exerts control in power usage and its concomitant relief to encampment life in the olive fields.

The inadequacy of the grid becomes even more acute during the winter, when there is a surge in energy demands to power the small heating devices people use to keep warm inside their tents:

“In January there were two days that power was off. It was very cold. Moria did nothing. They didn’t care. No one could have heating in the tent. […] I had to go to a café in town because in there, there was some heating. […] For these two days we were burning wood (in an old iron stove, inside the tent, close to the entrance) […] It was very dangerous. Too much smoke. I didn’t want it. When power was back, we stopped. […] It was warm (when they were burning wood) but no good for health; the breathing.”

“In winter, because of the heating devices they were using, the power was dropping all the time. (- Did you find any solution?) What solution? We had to cut the supply per section (inside the centre as well) in rotation, every 2 to 3 hours.”

The power source upon which the panels are connected can theoretically provide a maximum of around 1200 kW of active power, and it is the one that electrifies the northern and most populous section of the camp as well. To give an oversimplified but indicative example, this

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201 The most common heating device used in the makeshift structures was a small 2kW electric fan heater.

202 Sunday, April 14, 2019. In-depth interview with a young Yemeni man.

203 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.

204 The RIC is powered by two three-phase power sources which are of 800kVA and 600kVA apparent output capacity. The panels of the overspill camp are connected to the 800kVA power source which is the one electrifying the northern part of the camp as well. After much deliberation in the technical department office, it was concluded that this three-phase 800kVA source can theoretically provide a maximum of around 1200 kW of active power. Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.

Apparent power is the product of the voltage V (electric force) and amperes A (electric current), and in AC (alternating current) systems, like the hotspot’s grid, it comprises both active power and reactive power. Active power – denoted as kilowatts (kW) – is the work-producing part of apparent power that corresponds to the rate of energy supply used by lighting, electric heaters, electric stoves, phone chargers etc. Reactive power is the portion of apparent power that does no work, but it is “nevertheless vital to the active power that accompanies it, for reactive power maintains the voltage, or ‘electricity pressure’, needed to sustain the electromagnetic field required by the system as a whole.” Bennett, ‘The Agency of Assemblages and the North American Blackout’, 449, 450; ‘Glossary - U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA)’, accessed 1 August 2019, https://www.eia.gov/tools/glossary/.

205 According to the layout of the camp (fig.) the accommodation zones of the RIC are concentrated in its northern part, while the administration offices are concentrated in the south together with the accommodation zones of unattended minors and single women.
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means that even in a 100% efficiency, with no power losses and without any other use of electricity, this 1200kW power source can support a maximum of 600 electric heaters of 2kW operating, at the same time, in and out of the hotspot. With low winter temperatures, inadequate insulation and a population of more than three thousand people dependent on it, it seems evident to assume that, even under such grossly ideal calculations, the provision of electricity is limited and highly insufficient, and it can potentially become dangerous to the life of those depended on it.

Thus, this intricate arrangement of the grid makes the two encampment geographies within and beyond the hotspot’s fences inexorably interrelated. The two geographies, connected to the same limited power source, become conflated upon electrical nodes. Demarcations turn volatile, and power deficits, along with their concomitant consequences on encampment life, flow alternately between the two. Hence, despite the never-ending “relocation scheme” to diffuse overcrowding, the dangerous inadequacies of the hotspot’s provisions remain exposed upon its overloaded and failing grid, while the very conditions that led to the tragic events of 2016 – 2017 remain alarmingly unaddressed. The nomos of the hotspot approach to care – to provide substandard reception conditions upon “temporarily exhausted” resources – reiterates itself through voltage collapses. The more people stranded in Moria, whether inside or outside the centre, and the more urgent the power demand, the less competent the hotspot becomes to provide liveable conditions.

On its behalf, the technical department declares that the panels delimit the extent of its operations and responsibility in the olive grove. To my question whether they take any measures for the naked cables among olive trees, another highly dangerous aspect of the flimsy grid among

\[206\] Considering that, in January 2019, almost one thousand people residing in the overspill camp and half of the four thousand residing inside the centre were depended on this power source. See fig.

\[207\] Paragraph 9, Article 18, European Union, DIRECTIVE 2013/33/EU laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast).
flammable materials, the answer of the representative was clear: “We go (to check) until the panels; we don’t go further. We don’t enter the tents to check what people do there.” Thus, the capacity of electric charge to flow through conductors allows this form of (ill-)care to be conducted from a distance and deflect any culpability from its defects. What happens beyond the panels and upon its wired extensions falls in a grey zone regarding the administration’s involvement and accountability. At the same time, the administration can capitalize on the open-ended applicability of electric power to allocate the grid’s inefficiency upon misuse. For the technical department, if people in the olive grove used the electric power just to “have light and a socket to charge their phones, [and] not to cook, as they do now,” electric power would be sufficient. In other words, for the administration, what makes the provision of electricity in the overspill camp inadequate is not its limited output capacity, but, rather, that it is consumed for purposes not intended for upon its introduction.

This liminal infrastructural provision of electricity appears thus as an ambiguous mediator in the territorial production of containment beyond the hotspot’s fences. Its spatial configuration is constantly reworked upon the malleability of the grid and the positioning of the panels. The range of practises is negotiated upon electricity’s open-ended applicability and finite output capacity. Resilience and dependency are tweaked upon connections and extensions. Intervention and culpability are moderated upon nodes and wires. In other words, since its introduction, this form of minimalist and precarious care has reordered the geography of the overspill and its interrelation with the centre and the administration, while its provision maintains a tense balance between fostering and restraining encampment life there. At the same time, the olive fields are incorporated in the containment apparatus of the hotspot and hundreds of people remain there stranded outside (physically) but within (the hotspot’s control). The panels and the makeshift

208 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.

209 Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of the RIC’s technical department.
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grid reveal ill-care’s capacity for a borderwork of the bare minimum, control in the impoverishment of care.
Conclusion

From the “spectacular” intervention of the deputy minister in Pagani to the “mundane” instalment of a few power sockets outside Moria, ill-care appears entangled with the conflictual apparatus deployed in Lesvos for the containment of migrant movements into Europe. The cases of Pagani and Moria indicate that the provision of ill-care not only fosters conditions where the distinction between relief and suffering becomes increasingly blurred, but that those very conditions may advance interventions to further and consolidate migration policies and practises on the very premise of occupying an ambiguous space beyond politics, a space justified upon the immediate and urgent need to alleviate suffering. At the same time, the case of the overspill camp in Moria shows that ill-care can be, nonetheless, framed as an interim and temporary deviation from routine reception provisions upon exigent need even as it becomes a permanent substitution of adequate relief. More than a failure or a paradox of Europe’s humanitarian border, ill-care appears integral and expedient in Europe’s migration politics.

This essay gestures towards ill-care as an attempt to unsettle for more scrutiny what seems to have become “normal” in the containment geographies erected for those reaching Europe’s territorial space. As a closing note, I want to attend to a part of my interview with the representative of Eurolief. At some point, discussing about the makeshift camp, he told me that many exit the centre and move there because of a “rumour” that this might expediate their relocation to the mainland, only to add later that: “Even with an immense pressure when 3000 people were living there (summer of 2018), Athens wasn’t listening.”\(^\text{210}\) The case of Lesvos indicates that the co-optation of humanitarianism’s moral order in the governance of borders does not simply depoliticise state’s interventions for borderwork but, rather, stripes human

\(^{210}\) Wednesday, April 17, 2019. Interview with a representative of Eurolief.
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suffering from those that suffer and makes it a potential political resource for state action only when this seems expedient to its interests.

A few weeks ago, the newly appointed minister of Civil Protection visited the RIC in Moria to inspect the conditions there. Leaving the island, he stated:

“I’m leaving with the impression – a positive (one) – that the thoroughness with which the state’s services deal and manage the refugee problem here on the island has left me.”

In the published photos from his visit, plastic flowers can be seen attached to the barbed wire topping the fences of the hotspot.

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Figure 1 Aerial View of the containment geographies in Hotspot Moria and its periphery. The hotspot is the fenced camp in the upper side of the picture. Its satellite refugee camp run by “Movement on the Ground” is in the left side of the photo recognised by its symmetrical arrangement. The rest is the makeshift camp.

Figure 2 The makeshift camp from ground level. By the author, April 2019
Figure 3 The spatial and organisational plan of the Reception and Identification Centre in Moria. From the admiration office. By the author, January 2019.
Figure 4 A sketch plan of the olive grove. The satellite camp run by ‘Movement on the Ground” is indicated by the acronym O.G., while O.G. North 1 and O.G. North 2 refer to the irregular encampment zone of the RIC. From the administration office. By the author, January 2019.
Figure 5 Moria daily numbers. Olive Grove North as an accommodation zone of the hotspot; occupancy: 976, the second biggest in Moria. In January, one fifth of the hotspot's population was residing in the olive grove. By the author, January 2019.
Figures

Figure 6 Construction materials for the makeshift dwell. Pallets, tarpaulin sheets and tree branches. By the author, April 2019.
Figure 7 In construction: the pallet flooring of a makeshift dwell. By the author, April 2019.
Figure 8 The marking of the makeshift dwellings by eurorelief: numbering followed by OG. By the author, April 2019.
Figures
Figure 10 The fluctuating geographical expansion of the makeshift camp evident in the signs left on the ground from previous structures. By the author, April 2019.
Figure 11 The electric panel on an olive tree and its grid. By the author, April 2019.
Figure 12 Contestation on the panel. By the author, April 2019.
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