Borderland Religion in the State of Exception

Sharing Humanity in the Lived Spaces of Refugee Camps

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Abstract

This thesis explores practices and expressions of borderland religion, meaning religion in the context of migration. Through participant observation in two refugee camps followed by a subsequent discussion of post-colonial and spatial theory, the aim is to explore and reveal practices that become particularly prominent in displacement, interpreted in the context of religion. This is to shed light on different aspects of life in displacement, to discover practices that receive particular significance in migration, and to explore dynamic and migrating dimensions of religion. Through this research, humanity appear as a prevalent and emphasized practice among people living in displacement. Yet, this would not have been discovered without the bodily presence and experience of the researcher and the sharing of space with research subjects. Thus, this thesis suggests that valuable and important information about the life worlds of some people can only be approached to be understood through encounters and sharing of spaces.

Innhold

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The 2015 European refugee crisis - the background for this project

The year of 2015 marks the biggest displacement crisis in the world since the second world war, with over 65 million displaced people worldwide[1]. Differing not only in the number of people but also in the speed in which they became displaced[2], the wars in Syria and Iraq together with on-going conflicts in countries such as Afghanistan and Libya accelerated migration streams strongly[3]. The result was and still is overfilled borders and transit zones in the areas surrounding these conflicts. Yet, what has been deemed more important in the European context is the intensified stream of refugees attempting to enter Europe with varying luck. The so-called refugee crisis of 2015 differed from former ones namely in the lack of political response and assistance by European governments[4]. In fact, as Wilson and Mavelli points out; despite claims of humanitarianism and human rights, the general response to the refugee crisis in Europe was increasingly harsh migration policies and exclusionary rhetoric[5].

The refugee crisis, a term used mainly to describe the pressing situation of European governments, shed light on an underlying and gradually more visible trait in European politics. While footage of desperate people crossing European borders at any cost circulated the media, the response was a stricter, more exclusionary political climate increasing the influence of conservative parties such as National Rally in France, Alternativ für Deutschland known as AFD in Germany, Partir Voor de Vrijheid in Netherlands and Fremskrittspartiet in Norway, largely due to their anti-migration rhetoric. The result became a tug of war between political interests followed by a vacuum of political response. To this day, refugees are stuck in camps throughout the continent with no means of changing their situation, minimal access to basic facilities such as food, shower and shelter, increasing levels of frustration and decreasing levels of safety, waiting for states to decide whether to assist them or not. This is a

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[1] Mavelli, Luca & Wilson, Erin K., "The Refugee Crisis and Religion – Beyond Conceptual and Physical Boundaries", in Mavelli Luca & Wilson, Erin K. (eds.) *The Refugee Crisis and Religion – Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question, Rowman & Littlefield*, United States of America, 2017, pp. 1-22, p. 2

[2] Ibid. p. 3

[3] Ibid. p. 3

[4] Pries, Ludger, "Introduction: Civil Society and Volunteering in the So-Called Refugee Crisis of 2015 – Ambiguities and Structural Tensions in Refugee Protection and Civil Society in Europe", in Feischmidt, Margit, Cantat, Celine & Pries, Ludger (eds.) *Refugee Protection and Civil Society in Europe,* Palgrave MacMillan, 2019, pp. 1-23, pp. 1-3

[5] Mavelli, Luca & Wilson, Erin K., 2017, p. 2

process likely to take years.

As political disagreements between EU and Turkey combined with armed conflicts between Turkey and Syria have escalated in the course of the refugee crisis[6], Turkey being the intermediary between Syria and EU opened its borders early 2020 as retaliation to regional disagreements. This created yet another influx of refugees into Europe. Within days thousands of refugees crossed the border from Turkey to Europe, adding additional pressure to act[7]. This has resulted in a reinforcement of the already pressing situation consisting of overfilled refugee camps, lacking capacity to assist, and further destabilization of the region.

1.2 Religion as a source of debate in the reception of refugees

One source of conflict and debate in the refugee crisis relates to religion. According to Mavelli & Wilson, it is hard to think of a time in recent history when religion and refugees have been such prominent categories in public discourses around the world[8]. As large parts of refugees arriving in Europe come from countries with Muslim majorities such as Afghanistan and Syria, religion (meaning mainly Islam and other "deviations" from Christian traditions) has played a decisive role in European politics and debates about reception of refugees. A fundamental view of Islam as incompatible with the vision of Europe has shaped migration policies across the continent, some places more visibly than others. During the beginning of the crisis, Slovakia openly decided to accept only Christian refugees claiming it to concern the country's lack of Muslim facilities and that the refugees would not feel at home[9]. Poland followed shortly and did the same, only explicitly reasoning it with the political project of re-Christianizing Europe and therefore only accepting migrants from Christian countries like Ukraine[10]. In most other countries, these matters are still part of ongoing political tensions. Throughout the last five years, religion as in the religion of refugees as well as of countries and continents have become increasingly significant. Some draw parallels to the era of the Westphalian Peace Treaty during the 17th century, where European territories were bound to

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[6] Hale, William, "Turkey, the U.S., Russia and the Syrian Civil War", *Insight Turkey,* vol. 21, no. 4, 2019, pp. 25-40, pp. 33-34

[7] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/01/thousands-gather-at-turkish-border-to-cross-into-greece (accessed 23/05/2020, at 11.54)

[8] Mavelli, Luca & Wilson, Erin K., 2017, p. 1

[9] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33986738 (accessed 6/1/2020, at 13.09)

[10] https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/26/world/europe/immigration-poland-ukraine-christian.html (accessed 6/1/2020, at 13.14)

religion by law[11]. Others might say this is old news, first predicted by Samuel Huntington in his 2007 book *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Here, Huntington proposes that cultural and religious communities will be defining categories in the future and set the world order[12]. One example he uses in his vision is an increasing global Muslim population. Perhaps his vision is simplified, but he has been acknowledged for his accuracy on certain predictions and his work is discussed to this day.

1.3 The refugee crisis and religion in the Norwegian Context

Living in Norway, one of many European countries where debates about migration, reception and integration have rallied for decades, I have followed the development of the gradually more polarized discourse. Being a student in the program Religion and Society over a period of years, my interest in topics related to religion has increased. I have therefore become especially aware of the aspects explicitly and implicitly related to religion that characterize different debates. Questions of poverty, criminality and social differences are often reasoned with religious differences and the lacking ability of non-Christians to assimilate into a historically and cultural Christian society like Norway. Secular and non-religious tendencies that have characterized the Norwegian society for decades versus its Christian heritage are being used arbitrarily in the debate, but the point remains the same: the Muslim background of many migrants and refugees seems to be an unmanageable challenge in politics and has therefore been discussed frequently in the public discourse, even more so during the course of the refugee crisis. After being introduced to the close connection between religion, the multidimensional concept of citizenship, and which implications this may have on the many lives of refugees and migrating people, my attention turned to the lives of these people and religion and spirituality in this precarious context.

1.4 Religion and migration

Although large parts of the debate concern the presumed religious lives of those we refer to as refugees, we know little about the actual religious lives of the hundreds of thousands of people that for various reasons are living in between countries and citizenships. Religion is one of many dimensions of life in displacement, and exploring it might illustrate individual as

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[11] Sander, Hans-Joachim, "Religion-making in the border space and by border land", in Machado, Daisy, Turner, Bryan S. & Wyller, Trygve (eds.) *Borderland Religion – Ambiguous, Practices of Difference, Hope and Beyond,* Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2018, London and New York, pp. 119-135, p. 119
[12] Huntington, Samuel P., *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* Simon & Schuster, 2011

well as collective aspects of being displaced. While religion for some has been the reason for migrating, several scholars (see Hasan; Dorais; Gozdziak; Hagan) point to increasing religiosity among refugees and migrants, particularly after resettlement[13]. This hints to religion as a vital dimension of migration, especially in reestablishing in new cultural and religious landscapes. Still, what we know less about is the spiritual and religious life inside what philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls a *non place;* undetermined places between origin and settlement, a long-hauled state for many refugees[14]. As the number of displaced people in the late 2010's has reached yet another peak, these questions receive new relevance and deserves our attention. Only in Europe, close to one million asylum seekers live in borderlands awaiting pending asylum applications in 2019[15]. Depending on the desired state of destination, this process can take up to several years. These years are likely to be spent in transit zones such as asylum centers and refugee camps, something that may have implications for the religious and spiritual lives of many people.

1.5 Research Question

Based on these reflections, I have developed the following research question

How can religion be interpreted and understood within the spatial and situational context of a refugee camp?

I will address this question with material collected from participant observation in two refugee camps in Greece. Building the study on borderland religion theory, I will further interpret and discuss this material using post-colonial and spatial theory.

1.6 Aim

The aim of this research is to explore expressions and practices that grow out of displacement and may be interpreted within the framework of religion in the context of migration. Specifically that of *borderland religion[16],* the intersection between migration and religion that

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[13] See literature list

[14] Settler, Federico, "A postcolonial perspective on religion and migration", in Machado, Daisy, Turner, Bryan S. & Wyller, Trygve (eds.), *Borderland Religion – Ambiguous Practices of Difference, Hope and Beyond,* Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2018, London and New York, pp. 99-115, p. 109

[15] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/25/asylum-seekers-limbo-eu-countries (accessed 12/1/2020 at 13.07)

[16] Machado, Daisy, Turner B. & Wyller T. et.al, *Borderland Religion – Ambiguous Practices of Difference, Hope and Beyond,* Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018

as a field focuses on how the two influence each other. This will be done with the aim of illustrating aspects of life in displacement and explore social, spiritual and religious ways of living life inside a refugee camp. This will be elaborated further in the following chapters.

1.7 Content and structure

After this introduction, I will present the research context and background for the topic of migration and religion. Here, I will introduce the concept of borderland religion which constitutes the theoretical fundament of this thesis. In chapter 3, I will present the location of my research and the context of the study, namely the refugee camps. Furthermore, I will present my methodology being participant observation in chapter 4, followed by the theories informing this thesis, being post-colonial and spatial theory, in chapter 5 and 6. Chapter 7 will offer examples on interpretations of the concept of borderland religion. Chapter 8 offers reflections about the ethical aspects of my research. This chapter is placed specifically after the chapter about theory due to the theories' influence on ethical considerations and terms related to ethics. Chapter 9 will present relevant findings from the participant observation, followed by a discussion of these in chapter 10. A conclusion will finish the thesis in chapter 11.

2.0 Research background and context

I will in this chapter present previous research and the research context of the field of migration and religion, including the concept of borderland religion. This will give an overview of what we know so far about the usage, meaning and function of religion in migration and displacement, including new and alternative ways of exploring these things through concepts like borderland religion.

2.1 Religion and migration

Previous research points to an importance of religion for those who have fled or migrated. I will introduce some of it in the following.

A study of Syrian refugees in the US show that religious practice becomes part of maneuvering through unfamiliar landscapes of culture and religion after resettlement[17]. A similar study from UK illustrate the complexity of this resettlement and points to religion receiving often different yet reinforced functions relating to identity, collective and self-perception[18]. For some, religion becomes a safe and familiar factor in the transition to life in new circumstances. In these cases, explicit religious practices that draw on identity, such as wearing visible symbols and following specific precepts, are often accentuated [19]. For others, realizations of the political implications religious identity may have spark engagement, while others generate spiritual engagement through idleness[20].

A study of Kosovo-Albanian refugees in the US show that religion is a vital part of emotional and cognitive coping[21]. A similar study concerns Vietnamese refugees, whose religion has been reported to be a source of hope and comfort through inhuman conditions during their escape. Many of them refer to a strengthening of religious faith after what they experience as being saved by their religion[22].

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[17] Hasan, Nabiha, Mitschke, Diane B. & Ravi, Kristen E., "Exploring the role of faith in resettlement among Muslim Syrian refugees"*, Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018, pp. 223-238

[18] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Elena & Qasmiyeh, Yousif M., "Muslim Asylum-Seekers and Refugees: Negotiating Identity, Politics and Religion in the UK"*, Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 294-314

[19] Hasan, Nabiha, Mitschke, Diane B. & Ravi, Kristen E., 2018, pp. 229- 230.

[20] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Elena & Qasmiyeh, Yousif M., 2010

[21] Gozdziak, Elzbieta, "Spiritual Emergency Room: The Role of Spirituality and Religion in the Resettlement of Kosovar Albanians"*, Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2002, pp. 136-152

[22] Dorais, Louis Jacques, "Faith, Hope and Identity: Religion and The Vietnamese Refugees"*, Refugee Survey Quarterly,* Vol. 26, No. 2, UHNCR, 2007, pp. 57-68

In a study of Pentacostal Mayan communities migrating from Guatemala, Ebaugh and Hagan explains how religion is not only present during and after migration but also as a vital part of deciding to migrate[23]. Communities consult with local congregations and the pastor bears the last word in deciding whether migration is defensible[24]. Migrants participate in daily prayers and whole communities are encouraged to attend to rituals to increase the chances of migrants arriving safely in the US[25].

2.2 Religion in transit zones

Some research has also been done on religion in transit zones such as refugee camps, that confirm functions for people living there. Some refugees report that religious practice serves as pastime in camps due to the lack of productive and meaningful activities to attend to[26]. Different religious groups constitute communities within the camp and establish solidarity[27]. A study of Palestinian women in transit zones state that the role of religion in these communities cannot be overstated and that it relates particularly to resilience[28]. In such communities, religious belief provides meaning, orients daily life and helps handling poverty and hardship[29]. Also, faith is reported to be one of few things that help refugees in transit zones through often severe conditions of boredom and isolation[30]

Forced Migration Review, a journal discussing the many aspects of forced migration, has dedicated a volume to faith and migration that contains contributions from humanitarian as well as religious actors in the aid sector. This volume offer stories and perspectives that portray different forms of religious involvement in displacement crises. It also presents one side of the debate between humanitarian and faith-based aid organizations, that advocate for

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[23] Ebaugh, Helen Rose & Hagan, Jacqueline, "Calling upon the Sacred: Migrants' Use of Religion in the Migration Process", *International Migration Review*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2003, pp. 1145-1162
[24] Ebaugh, Helen Rose & Hagan, Jacqueline, 2003, pp. 1150-1151
[25] Ibid. p. 1150
[26] Dorais, Louis Jacques, 2007, p. 61
[27] Ibid. p. 60
[28] Darychuk, Anthea & Jackson, Suzanne, "Understanding Community Resilience Through the Accounts of Women Living in West Bank Refugee Camps", *Journal of Women and Social Work*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Sage Publications, 2015, pp. 447-460, p. 453
[29] Ibid., p. 453
[30] Al Akash, Ruba & Boswall, Karen, "Personal Perspectives of protracted displacement: an ethnographic insight into the isolation and coping mechanisms of Syrian women and girls living as urban refugees in northern Jordan", I*ntervention*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2015, pp. 203-215, p. 211

an acknowledgment and strengthening of faith and spirituality in humanitarian work[31]. Especially FBO's (faith-based organizations) challenge what they deem a neglect of the spiritual and religious needs of refugees, claiming poor accommodation for religious practice, an important part of their mental support. One contributor writes that "The valuable psychosocial role of spirituality and supportive faith networks in reinforcing people's coping capacity is often overlooked by the wider humanitarian community"[32], requesting humanitarian sector to improve faith-based support. Another contributor claims that when humanitarian aid organizations respond to the needs of displaced people, religion and spirituality is often not high on the list[33]. He refers to incidents where material originally provided for building homes instead was used for building religious spaces, and times where shrouds for religious burial of people dying from starvation and sickness were highly requested[34]. Some organizations that are quoted in the journal, such as Islamic Relief, actively work to facilitate religious practice in refugee camps as they claim this is requested by the refugees[35]. Workers of Islamic Relief upholds that this can contribute to trust and relation between aid organizations and refugees of all faiths. One of the organizations claim that "Spiritual life, not often recognized by aid agencies, is a priority for many conflict-affected communities, perhaps especially in situations of displacement...IR's role in camp management has required a recognition that space for worship and religious education be considered a basic need in some cases as this is a priority of the camp residents themselves"[36].

In the context of this debate, it should also be mentioned that religion in transit zones may also involve proselytism. This has for one been a problem in the infamous Moria camp on the island of Lesvos. As the camp is run by an evangelical missionary organization (previously convicted of proselytism in Greece), incidents of proselytism towards refugees has been reported. This has involved persuading refugees to convert to Christianity with advantages of

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[31] "Faith and responses to displacement", *Forced Migration Review,* Issue 48, November 2014, University of Oxford

[32] Cruickshank, Robert & Cowley, Cat, "Faith motivation and effectiveness: a Catholic experience", *Faith and responses to displacement in Forced Migration Review,* Issue 48, November 2014, University of Oxford, pp. 18-22, p. 18

[33] Herson, Maurice, "Not in our remit", *Forced Migration Review,* Issue 48, November 2014, University of Oxford, pp. 32-33, p. 32

[34] Ibid. p. 32

[35] Kidwai, Sadia, Moore, Lucy, &FitzGibbon, Atallah, "The role of religion in the formation of cross-community relationships", *Forced Migration Review*, Issue 48, November 2014, University of Oxford, pp. 10-14

[36] Ibid. p. 11

money and favors, handing out bibles translated to several languages[37]. Although I find this important to mention in this context, it belongs to a discussion outside the scope of this thesis as it does not concern or reflect the religious needs and expressions of displaced people. It also concerns ethical and juridical breaches that exceeds questions of borderland religion per se.

2.3 The Concept of Borderland Religion

Looking at previous research on religion and migration, it is reasonable to assume that religion serves important functions for refugees in transit zones. However, while previous research confirms the presence and significance of religion in displacement and illustrates the role of religion in integration, borderland religion seeks to discover the religious and spiritual dynamics that arise around border crossings and grow out of displacement[38]. This implies that borderland religion is a study that focuses outside traditional religiosity. The field deals with expressions and practices that can be interpreted as religion, yet that differ from traditional religious expressions namely because of migration. It thus demonstrates alternative and creative expressions of religion and spirituality in displacement and ways of exploring these[39]. The concept of borderland religion that I relate to in this thesis derives from the interdisciplinary publication *Borderland Religion – Ambiguous Practices of Difference, Hope and Beyond* (2018)[40].

Borderland religion is a concept combining migration and religion. The concept can be used as an optic to investigate what appears when religion and migration intersect, such as when people are forced to live in marginal conditions. Religion can in these cases be interpreted multifunctionally, such as resistance, survival, community and so forth. As this field looks at the intersection between migration and religion, migration being a highly broad field, it does not restrict itself exclusively to studies of religion or religious traditions. As it is as much as study of migration, it constitutes an intersectional concept touching on disciplines like theology, sociology, anthropology, political science and a broader specter of humanities[41].

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[37] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/02/aid-workers-accused-of-trying-to-convert-muslim-refugees-greek-camp-detention-centre-lesvos-christianity, (entered 06/03/2020 at 13:38) https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2018/5/1/the-abusive-ngo-with-a-stranglehold-on-refugees-lives, (entered 06/03/2020 at 13:46)

[38] Machado, Daisy, Turner, Bryan & Wyller, Trygve et.al, *Borderland Religion – Ambiguous Practices of Difference, Hope and Beyond,* Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 2018

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid. p. 1

This means that its studies have political, cultural as well as religious and spiritual implications.

Borderland religion develops within a post-colonial tradition. It seeks to expand definitions of religion and offer alternative knowledge, that also includes those who do not have the means of integrating their experience into an available scheme of knowledge. Challenging conceptions of religion as bound to traditions and specific cultural and geographical spaces might generate knowledge about religion as more of a dynamic and migrating phenomenon reflecting the current global society. Examples of central areas of investigation is how practices and life views are expressed within given spatial circumstances such as refugee camps. This may inform us of which functions and forms religion might attain in varying conditions, and how this is practiced by people that live life outside ordinary society[42].

2.4 Summing up chapter 2

I have in this chapter presented the research context for religion and migration and I have introduced the concept of borderland religion. I have looked at the different ways in which religion serves functions and meaning for migrants, refugees and displaced people. I will in the following introduce the location and field of my research.

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[42] Ibid.

3.0 The Field

To better understand the topic and content of this thesis, I will now continue by introducing the field that constitutes the context and location of my study. Following the thesis' research question and aim, I conducted participant observation in two refugee camps outside of Athens, Greece. I will now give a description of this field and my stay there to make better sense of my theoretical and methodological choices and the material. I will begin by introducing Greece as the location of my research and the first line reception country for refugees arriving in Europe. Then I will give a detailed description of the refugee camps and the work there as both the field of my participant observation and research context. I will also discuss the reoccurring situation of having several roles in the field as both a researcher and a volunteer, in addition to balancing my own persona in a field that challenged me in many ways.

3.1 Greece

Greece constitutes the south-east border of the European Union and has therefore become the landing point for refugees from Middle East, North-Africa and Turkey, arriving by sea on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea[43]. Of the over one million refugees who attempted to enter Europe in 2015, over 850 000 of these landed on Greek Islands[44]. This made Greece the protagonist of the European refugee crisis. By 2020, over 100 000 refugees are still located in Greece spread throughout 30 refugee camps[45]. While most refugees are placed on the mainland, the situation is more acute on the islands as these have become detention-like places for registration. They are housing more refugees than the islands themselves have capacity for. When numbers of arrivals are big, registration and application processes take longer and contribute to keep refugees stuck in camps on these islands for years. Additionally, as numbers of refugees increase together with levels of frustration, conflicts between local communities, aid workers and refugees escalate[46]. By 2020, the situation is worse than ever as conflicts between EU and Turkey has led to a new influx of refugees from Turkey to Greek islands where the capacity was already scarce. With only one camp originally built for 2000 people, the island of Lesbos in reality houses over 20 000 migrants, ten times its capacity.

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[43] Kousolis, Antonis & Moris, Demetrios, "Refugee Crisis in Greece: healthcare and integration as current challenges", *Perspectives in Public Health*, vol. 137, no. 6, Sage Publications, 2017, pp. 309-310, p. 309
[44] Ibid. p. 309
[45] https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Greece/The-problem-with-refugee-camps-in-Greece-198714, (entered 29.02.2020 at 13:27)
[46] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51204084, (entered 29.02.2020 at 13:38)

That constitutes one fourth of the entire population on the island[47]. This makes an island like Lesbos a hotbed for racism, conflict and violence[48], and with the recent outbreak of the pandemic COVID-19, we have yet to see how the refugees stuck on these islands will be affected.

Although places like these exist all over the world[49], Greece was a natural option as location for my research as it has been the center of the European refugee crisis since its beginning. It has several refugee camps and will continue to be the temporary yet permanent home of refugees for years from now. Hence, it offers an environment where questions such as those discussed in this thesis are relevant. Additionally, the stream of migration has been continuous, meaning the situation has not changed or improved since its very beginning. Considering how conflicts in the region have continued to escalate, studying migration in Greece will remain as relevant as ever.

3.2 Finding a field

Like other humanitarian crises, the European refugee crisis is characterized by assistance from humanitarian organizations and civil volunteers[50]. Different organizations, most depending on the efforts of volunteers, are operating all over Greece. However, finding an organization that would allow for research inside refugee camps was challenging. I corresponded with humanitarian organizations, also outside of Greece, most of whom did not have the capacity to assist research in their camps or were skeptical to allow for research with refugees. Volunteering for an organization was one of few available options for getting access to a refugee camp to conduct my observation. The importance of being present to study a space like the refugee camp will be resumed as a central topic in the chapters to come.

After some time, I found an organization that connects volunteers with grassroot organizations globally. They connected me with the organization I ended up working with in Greece. They were positive to letting me observe as long as it did not get in the way of the volunteer work. They asked me to base the research on my experience as a volunteer and not

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[47] Fouskas, Vassilis K., Gökay, Bülent & Vankovska, Biljana, «Special Issue: Crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean and COVID-19", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies,* vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 295-305, p. 6
[48] Ibid. p. 6
[49] Borders between Syria and all neighboring countries, Myanmar and Bangladesh, US and Mexico, South Africa and neighboring countries to mention some.
[50] Pries, Ludger, 2019, pp. 1-3

perform interviews or similar research involving refugees directly in the camps per se. They were negative to conducting interviews and involving refugees directly in research due to asymmetric power relations. This will be further discussed in the chapter about methodology and ethical reflections.

The work was in an organization that cooks and provides meals for and at times together with the refugees inside the camps, and I was able to conduct my observation as part of this. It is one of few organizations that have access to camps in that area besides the workers of IOM (International Organization of Migration) who run and manage the camps.

3.3 Balancing the double role of a researcher and a volunteer

There are certain ethical concerns related to the combining of roles as volunteer and researcher. This will be further elaborated in the chapter about ethical considerations. Still, it needs to be stated introductory that the ambiguity between my role as researcher, volunteer and human being was prominent throughout the whole stay and continued to be so through the entire work with this thesis. The reason why I volunteered was my research project, and as a researcher I had certain obligations towards my research subjects. One example is considerations needed to be done in gathering and storing information. However, as a volunteer, I also had obligations and responsibilities towards my host organization that at times conflicted with my role as a researcher. One example is how valuable information would appear in my encounters with refugees as a volunteer, that might not have appeared through the research alone. This could at times lead to conflicting situations, such as when conversational topics overlapped between that of informal conversations and information valuable for my research. Another example is how I focused on my tasks as volunteer, something that shaped my perspectives in a way that might have differed if I was only doing research. In addition to this, I was also me and could not stop being me even if I was a volunteer or a researcher. Although there is a focus on bracketing out previous ideas and opinions in fieldwork[51], recent contributions suggest that it is equally important for researchers to accept individual emotions and preconceptions as part of the research[52]. Rather than pretending that they are not there, it is important to be conscious and aware of them and

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[51] Harvey, Graham, "Field Research – Participant Observation", in Engler, Steven & Stausberg, Michael (eds.) "The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion", Routledge, 2013, pp. 217-244, p. 231
[52] Hoel, Nina, "Embodying the Field: A Researcher's Reflection on Power Dynamics, Positionality, and the Nature of Research Relationships", *Fieldwork in Religion*, Equinox Publishing Ltd., Sheffield, 2013, pp. 27-49

pay attention to how they may interfere but also inform encounters and findings. This implies that I also had previous ideas, opinions and emotions about the field of research that played a role. As it was nearly impossible to not be affected as a human being, this became an additional role to balance. Examples are how some of the camp's inhabitants would initiate contact and get more easily attached than others. This could lead to complicated situations as it is the responsibility of a volunteer and even more so a researcher to regulate this contact. Yet, as a human being it would feel natural and even responsible to reciprocate contact. In other words, encounters with the camp's inhabitants would at times lead to conflicting situations related to the balancing of several roles. This was one of many ethically challenging dimensions of doing research in a field where people live under such difficult conditions. Entering the field with my own body and self, it was hard not to be affected by the circumstances and it was at times hard to de-attach from personal emotions and perceptions.

I have tried to be clear about this aspect of the research throughout the thesis and discuss its implications for different situations and encounters. This is an important message to communicate because it is crucial in responsible research to be clear about the different roles that have been operative during research, and furthermore how they affect the results. Entering a field of vulnerability shaped my experiences of the field and in the field, and questions like how to respond to, store and handle certain types of information appeared as response to these conflicts. Because of this, I have chosen not to include the information that appeared in situations where these conflicting roles became too prominent.

These factors have been influential in the gathering of my material and will continue to be so in the following accounts. I have attempted to problematize this throughout the thesis when it appears that my roles are blurred. A more detailed reflection about these things can be found in the chapter about of ethical considerations.

3.4 The Camps

The operative camps I observed in were both placed on the mainland of Greece. These are camps that many arrive to by foot from Turkey through Bulgaria, while others are transferred from the Greek islands. While one was crowded, filled all the way to the parking lot of the area with tents and improvised homes for over 2000 registered and unregistered refugees, the other was placed inside an old warehouse building, housing only less than half of the other camps' inhabitants and only registered ones. Both camps were placed well outside the closest

villages and civilization as such, in remote areas of agriculture and previously industrial areas filled with disused warehouses. I assume they have been placed there due to availability of space, but as they both lie in places not normally visited by most people, I could not help but wonder if the locations were chosen intentionally.

I will now describe the two camps in detail. I will be referring to them without names for reasons of anonymity.

The first camp is a big field, previously a military outpost, among olive and orange fields far away from the nearest village. There is no public transport nearby and the nearest hub for public communication is about half an hour drive or an hour walk or longer. The camp is split in two. One part is occupied by registered refugees and is filled with small, state-provided barracks, outdoor toilets, a kiosk where people can buy basic necessities and some other facilities such as a playground and a tent used as a mosque. The mosque is a central observation that will reappear in the discussion. The rest of the camp is mostly inhabited by unregistered refugees, meaning it is overfilled with smaller and bigger tents almost all the way out of the camp's area. IOM, the organization who runs the camp, are stationed in small barracks by the entrance of the camp by a big gravel football field, dressed in visible blue vests.

At the time of my observation it was still sunny despite it already being fall season, and the camp would be warm and dusty, therefore dirty. During other seasons it can be cold, and rain floods the camp and washes away tents. As the camp contains over 2000 refugees, it is busy with life. The nice weather creates an impression of urban liveliness at first glance, yet chaotic and unorganized. Clothes are hanging from clothing lines, people are washing clothes and cooking on the ground outside their tents, kids are playing, young men are talking in groups and women are following kids around. While kids are playing in the sun as kids often do, they are playing with rubbish, surrounded by more rubbish, empty plastic bottles and electronic waste. They are playing among people that might be experiencing trauma, frustration, idleness and boredom. Young kids, teenagers, adolescents, families and elders are forced together inside this camp, living their lives side by side in between tents, rubbish and kid's games. The lack of space in the camp has reformed the camp's previous mosque into the home of nearly hundred people. Another big marquee is now used as a mosque and is the most peaceful place in the whole camp, yet empty most of the time. Soon, maybe this too will be the new home

for the many recently arrived refugees. Writings and drawings have been made on the walls of the tents. They reflect the nationality, situation and what may be deemed pride and sorrows of the people living there.

The other camp is a disused industrial warehouse in a landscape full of similar buildings near the highway. The building is a tall, vast industrial building, housing approximately 800 people, although clearly never designed to be used as home. Here live only registered refugees. The atmosphere feels discreet and anticipating, like something is about to happen. The building is cold, contrasting the strong sun outside, and has a strange acoustic because of the high ceiling and concrete walls. It is quiet in this camp. Less people, less noise, less movement. Also, maybe because it is a building, people stay inside and not outside in the open. You can see some women sitting outside barefoot, talking together and on their phones. Kids playing around, running in and out of the building with different objects such cardboards, strollers for dolls, sometimes a stray kitten. Men stay in the main hall, selling items from small, improvised kiosks. I do not know from where they receive the items that they sell. Sometimes a van that sells fruit and vegetables stand by the entrance to the camp, creating big lines of people. But all in all, a quieter place. It might be because of the registered profile of this camp which leads to fewer people entering and leaving. When refugees register, they are bound to their respective camp until their asylum application has been treated. Thus, when there are registered refugees only it becomes a more permanent group compared to that of the other camp, where groups enter, leave and keep moving for better prospects. Outside is a ramp, probably built for trucks and vehicles, but now used as main entrance to this shared home. There is a parking lot with an IOM-post, a school and a kinder garden with a small playground. Inside are the homes of refugees, previously offices or storage rooms filled with all sorts of assets like strollers, big packages of diapers, shoes, clothes, carpets, bags and suitcases. The lives of families and individuals are stored in these rooms, originally made for storing goods. This dusty block of concrete is storing families, little children, and all their belongings. A kitchen consisting of three sinks and two cookers are shared by the hundreds of people living there. The main hall with a café and kiosks ran by the refugees is decorated with flags, probably from those who have lived there over the years. In this camp too, there are paintings on the wall, both colorful motives and decorations made for the kids, together with scribblings done by refugees. Some of the scribblings may reflect the thoughts of the refugees that have lived there. One place says; "let them go because the right people will stay". Some

of the drawings looks like they have been done by kids, like a man with a blood-dripping knife.

3.5 The workday

The organization I volunteered with worked in the camps five days a week. One of the camps would be visited every day for some hours in the late afternoon. The other would be visited two days a week, while we would spend the whole day from morning until late afternoon there cooking inside the camp together with the refugees. Visits to the first camp were not only shorter, but more hectic as there were more people and even more so in need of free food as they were not registered and had no source of income. Visits to this camp were therefore more oriented towards distribution of the meals as equally, peacefully and effectively as possible in a big crowd of people. While most inhabitants of this camp were of same nationality, the crowd was quite diverse in terms of age and equal in terms of gender. There was also an equal share between families and unaccompanied minors. The line was split in two between men and women while kids would surround the area the whole time and play or stay in line with their parents. Through daily meetings and what could be deemed as a form of cooperation in distributing the food, we were well introduced to the group of this camp and its dynamic. There would be many of the same people queuing every day and observing them day after day offered the opportunity to recognize them and an impression of relations and the overall dynamic of the group. The days where we only visited this camp, we would cook in the base of the organization, a small house in a village between the two camps, pack the food and drive to the camp.

Visits to the other camp were longer and calmer, and offered the chance to get a more thorough impression of both the camp and its inhabitants, in addition to the fact that the camp itself was smaller and less hectic. We would ask one person from the camp to be in charge of the cooking, often being a man who brought friends to help. The thought was that the refugees were to participate in the cooking, but this varied slightly from time to time. Sometimes a few people would show up and help cut vegetables, but mostly there were larger groups of kids wanting to help but were not allowed to use the knives. Mothers and fathers were busy with everything from washing clothes, cutlery and big carpets to bureaucratic matters and phone calls.

3.6 Summing up chapter 3

I have in this chapter presented the location, field and spatial context of my research, being Greece and two out of many refugee camps situated there. I have also touched upon the situation of having double and sometimes conflicting roles as researcher and volunteer in the field simultaneously, as this is a topic that returns frequently in my material.

I will in the following chapter present the methodology of my research and discuss some of its ethical and practical implications.

4.0 Methodology

I will in this chapter present the methodology of my research, being participant observation. I will explain the reasoning behind this choice of method for my particular study. I will also discuss some practical and ethical implications that follow with qualitative research involving vulnerable groups.

4.1 Choice of method

The research question is what dictated my methodology. The aim of this study was to explore expressions of borderland religion among people living in refugee camps. As these expressions can neither be found nor explained through theories or textual sources alone, they cannot be studied only in those terms either. This combined with a lack of previous research on the specific phenomenon indicated the need for a qualitative, explorative study. Also, as borderland religion is a phenomenon that emerge in specific spatial and situational contexts, being present to observe it was one method to provide valuable insight. I therefore conducted participant observation in two refugee camps for a period of two weeks. I will now elaborate on this method.

4.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation is thought to derive from anthropology, specifically from anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski who claimed the necessity of living among people over time to be able to learn about them and their culture[53]. Close involvement and engagement with people are more likely to create a sense of respect and understanding. Personal involvement through observation and active participation creates what sociologist Max Weber called *verstehen* (directly translated to understanding), a deeper, more personal understanding vital to qualitative research[54]. The method offers perspectives both empirically and theoretically powerful as information that is hardly attainable outside the field of interest can be gathered[55]. In the study of religion, this might be especially important as it helps highlight the many reasons for and ways of being religious that can contribute to enrich discourses about religiosity[56].

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[53] Harvey, Graham, 2013, p. 220
[54] Alan Fine, Gary, "Participant Observation", in Wright, James D. (ed.) *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd edition, Elsevier Ltd., 2015, pp. 10073-11078, p. 11074
[55] Ibid., p. 11075
[56] Harvey, Graham, 2013, p. 221

Compared to textual or historical studies of religion, participant observation is considered the best approach in the study of lived or performed religion[57]. The method indicates that much information lies in observable practices and expressions, and that religion cannot be understood without paying attention to "embodied, materialized, local and varying practice"[58], referring to its lived reality. This emphasizes the local and varying nature of religion that is essential to borderland religion.

Additionally, what the *thick descriptions* that are a crucial aspect of this method offer is a sense of what is actually done rather than theoretical constructions of it[59]. This might be especially relevant in trying to promote diversity. Thick descriptions are descriptions containing perspectives and details beyond first impressions[60]. They are needed to provide readers with a richer picture so that relevant nuances can contribute to enable critical debate[61]. Examples of thick descriptions are details in weather, material surroundings, noise, people's way of dressing, voices, facial expressions and so forth. They are important because rich understanding of a phenomenon can be attained through seemingly simple details. In my own observation, details such as what I perceived as calmness and gentle approaches from the refugees is an important detail of our encounter. One example is how most people smiled and politely greeted us, even helped us, after waiting for us in intense sun when we were hours late to deliver their meal. This is essentially different from another likely scenario where they could have been angry and frustrated. Thus, the details paint a picture of the experience beyond that of the mere encounter itself. The story would have been fundamentally different without these details.

4.3 Sharing lived space as method

An important dimension of participant observation is the way researcher and research subject share lived space. The concept of lived space will be further explained in the chapter about spatial theory. However, shortly summarized, sharing lived space implies that the researcher is present in the space of the research subject to share the moods, energies and dynamics that fill that space as an important part of the research. This becomes crucial in studies of

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[57] Ibid., p. 217
[58] Ibid.p. 218
[59] Ibid. p. 222
[60] Ibid. p. 237
[61] Ibid. p. 237

vulnerable groups as sharing space also leads to a certain sharing of vulnerability[62], through perceiving, sensing and experiencing the same conditions[63]. This is also important because it offers understanding that cannot be gathered in other ways. Rønsdal uses the example of temperature. Seeing cold temperatures predicted on weather forecasts is something fundamentally different from experiencing cold temperatures on one's own body[64]. To understand the situation of a someone forced to live in that cold, such as a homeless person, it is necessary to share space with that person, being outside in the cold weather, something that enables you to share lifeworld[65]. To do this, one must be present as you are part of it. Thus, emotions, perceptions and impressions are vital aspects of the material and gathering of that material in research such as my own. This also highlights the importance of thick descriptions that function as a tool to describe these experiences.

4.4 Participant observation in borderland religion

In borderland religion, the lived dimension of religion as discussed above is composed by factors of migration and displacement. Practices of borderland religion is interpreted as that based on migration, displacement and the conditions that differentiate them from religion practiced in ordinary societies. This means that practices of borderland religion are inseparable from their spatial and situational contexts. It is therefore hard to know beforehand what to observe as this is contextual and variable. Due to the fact that borderland religion operates outside of traditional frameworks, it is not fruitful to focus on specific religious communities or practices. Following Talal Asad's philosophy in his article *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*[66], focusing on specific traditions might exclude local and contextually based practices which are vital to the concept of borderland religion. Also, it would be challenging to know the variety of practices and beliefs inside a refugee camp and thus which practices to look for. The camps are composed by groups of different religious denominations, but people's religious identities are also often on hold. Some have fled for religious reasons and are not expressive about their religious identity. It can therefore be counter-effective to focus on specific religious traditions in a study of borderland religion.

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[62] Rønsdal, Kaia, 2017, p. 65
[63] Wyller, Trygve, 2018, p. 87
[64] Rønsdal, Kaia, 2017, p. 65
[65] Ibid. p. 62
[66] Asad, Talal, The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam, *Qui Parle*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Duke University Press, 2009, pp. 1-30

4.5 Why I did not do interviews

In the introductory work of this thesis, I considered conducting in-depth interviews with refugees. This would have been a valuable source to discover personal perceptions of spirituality and religion. Yet, as the topic of this thesis concerns local and contextually based expressions and practices related to their spatial context, in-depth interviews would not necessarily have been the best source to explore these things. The aim of the study has been to explore practices that appear in displacement. In interviews, varying definitions of and references to religion could have resulted in unclarity regarding this aim. This means that clear definitions of religion and similar terms would have been crucial in such a study. However, it is likely that this would exclude the local and contextually based expressions. Thus, participant observation was therefore a more fruitful method to study these expressions.

There would also have appeared formal and ethical challenges in conducting interviews with people in such vulnerable situations. Most organizations were reluctant to involve refugees in interviews due to the asymmetric power relation between researcher and subject in this specific context. A Norwegian aid organization were negative to allow for research with refugees in their camps, but were positive to letting me do research with refugees that had been granted asylum and were resettled in Norway. This would have been less ethically complicated considering they would not have been in the same vulnerable situation as a person living in a refugee camp. Yet, although they would have offered valuable perspectives and information, they would have been living in a wholly different context. This would eventually have led to a different study of a different group as their perspectives would have been shaped by the experience of resettling in a new country. Observing was therefore the best option I had in studying the phenomenon I wished to study.

Yet, as is often the case in participant observation, conversations with the inhabitants of the camp would take place as we spent time together daily. We would in one camp spend several hours with the refugees in the kitchen. As we cooked together, we would sit and talk while we worked. It would be unnatural for me not to participate in conversations, not ask questions about their lives or not answer theirs about mine. This relates to the previously mentioned conflict between the different roles I carried in that situation. At times, my role as a volunteer would surpass my role as a researcher, meaning that I would talk to the inhabitants of the camp as a volunteer without considering research precepts about not attaining information without consent. At other times, the person that I am, being curious, interested and with a

specific set of interests would influence the conversations that I had as a volunteer. Some of the refugees were more open than others, and there would be times were conversations would lead to more personal matters, such as family, education and personal convictions. Thus, although I did not do interviews, some information was gathered through informal conversations. I will use some of these in my material, however fully anonymous.

4.6 Considerations in participant observation

All qualitative research such as my own demand special attention to ethical and relational matters as they involve interaction with other people. I will discuss some of these in the following, using concepts and principles from the methodology of experienced researchers.

4.6.1 Nina Hoel and Embodying the field

In an article that discusses ethical and relational matters in qualitative research, Norwegian researcher of religion Nina Hoel refers to her own research with women in South Africa. She highlights three factors that demands special reflection in qualitative research[67]. These are positionality, accountability and partiality, collected from the research methodology of Donna Haraway. All three relate to the relation between researcher and research subject. They need special consideration as they impact the study through its findings and results, and eventually its legitimacy. I will present these in the following.

Positionality

Positionality refers to the relation between researcher and research subject in terms of power. There is an inevitable asymmetry in power balance in this relation due to the power that the researcher has in framing the research, asking questions and determining results. However, other factors further reinforce this, such as gender, age, nationality, ethnicity and social background. When doing research with vulnerable groups, this asymmetry is further strengthened, especially so by the fact that the researcher can pull in and out of the research field at any given moment. A research subject cannot and ends up being the vulnerable part. Researchers need to be aware of this dynamic and pay attention to how it affects the research subject and eventually the results[68]. One way of challenging this dynamic is by daring to step out of the traditional format of research, where the researcher determines the course of the research. By letting the research subject choose a suitable format of informing, and in letting

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[67] Hoel, Nina, 2013, pp. 27-49
[68] Ibid., p. 30

them focus on aspects they deem important, there appears a mutuality of participation in this relation. Nina Hoel also emphasizes making use of the body in research[69]. When actively engaging in the field, these fixed roles become more fluid. Without making use of the body and its senses, valuable information risk getting lost along the way. An example used by Hoel to portray this is when she was interviewing a South African woman about female sexuality, who also happened to be a spiritual healer[70]. When this woman insisted on healing Hoel, Hoel had to step out of the static and fixed role she had entered as a researcher. Suddenly, the healer sat with powerful knowledge and was now the one guiding Hoel through an unfamiliar field that was of great unforeseen learning value. In this way, a mutuality of power appeared as they both sat with each their set of knowledge, informing and guiding each other[71].

In my own research, questions of positionality related largely to the balancing between roles. Engaging in the field of the refugee camp often demanded me to step out of my role as a researcher, other times as a volunteer, and switch to being myself to grasp the surrounding situation. Certain situations demanded me to pay attention as a human being with my own personal perspectives, that did not belong to the role as neither volunteer nor researcher. This confirms and portrays the hybrid interplay between these three roles in the field. Questions of positionality were also one of the most important things to be considered in the meeting with my research subjects. They constitute a vulnerable group in all thinkable ways, making visible the asymmetry of our encounter. Not only am I a white European female, visibly privileged through random aspects of my existence. I live my everyday life without having to consider reasons for migrating. Even more importantly, I could enter and exit the field as I wished. Thus, we live very different lives and have seemingly little in common. Questions of positionality therefore required me to at times step out of my role as researcher and volunteer, to myself as a human being to be able to listen and understand with my emotions what was expressed to me verbally and non-verbally.

With that in mind, principles like positionality might not be fully graspable until entering the research field. The importance of positionality became apparent to me first inside the camps, after meeting the refugees. For instance, after observing the conditions they lived in, I

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[69] Ibid., pp. 34-37
[70] Ibid., p. 39
[71] Ibid., p. 39

understood that although they are mentioned as a group, they are in fact individuals that process the burden of their situation separately. Thus, although I had understood the formal reasons, I first then understood the aid organizations' emphasis on not involving refugees directly in research. I realized that participating in research related to the situation they are forced to live in, without having anywhere else to go, might be experienced more challenging than I had previously realized. The risk that appears in doing such research is that some people may feel pressured to participate, believing it could potentially improve their situation. Others might feel forced as the relation in terms of power is so imbalanced. As the organization noted, questions of language are also a decisive factor that could further reinforce this asymmetry. Most of the refugees speak only their native language and have little to no knowledge in English. Also, as in any research, the language related to the research itself might not be familiar even when speaking the same language. Thus, one likely scenario is that research subjects could comply to something they were not sufficiently informed of.

This exemplifies how lack of awareness about positionality can affect research in negative ways. Also, as has been discussed elsewhere in the context of volunteer work, the involvement between untrained visitors of refugee camps and refugees may contribute to impact refugees negatively, as many volunteers move in and out of their lives with no predictability after coming and going for short stays[72]. Volunteers and aid workers are therefore advised not to become personal or involve too much in the refugees they meet in their work[73]. In other words, to reflect about their positionality. Although refugees themselves claim that they appreciate the care and attention they receive from volunteers[74], mental health professionals claim that observing people coming only to leave may reinforce a feeling of impotence and helplessness among those who are stuck in camps. This is a question related to positionality that needs to be considered in research with vulnerable groups.

Accountability
Accountability concerns the researcher's responsibility and commitment to not reinforce dominant hegemonic paradigms and reproduce stereotypical representations such as divisions between races, genders and/or religious minorities[75]. This does not imply that researchers

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[72] https://time.com/5778412/volunteer-tourism-greece-refugee-humanitarian/?fbclid=IwAR0CuZzaGW2I5wH-8Rmx5Q1d7WbkUSeSp8g4Yc5PlTyzx6b_f8GP6Hj_Z-I (entered 05.03.2020 at 13:49)
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Hoel, Nina, 2013, p. 30

should refrain from replicating experiences and observations, but means that they should openly and thoroughly reflect on them so that research does not contribute to narrow or one-sided representations[76]. Questions of accountability in my own research relates highly to avoiding further victimization of refugees. How can matters related to refugees be discussed in ways that do not reinforce stereotypical images of them as only victims? They are clearly in a vulnerable situation, something that was the starting point for both volunteering and wanting to write something about it. However, continuously being depicted as victims robs groups and individuals of their agency and respect, which again robs them their possibilities and abilities to act independently. Also, a reinforcement of this image can impact the public discourse in a way that has negative consequences for refugees. Despite their extreme and challenging situation, refugees are a stigmatized group in many societies. Since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015, refugees have been one of the most debated topics in European media. When they are not depicted as victims, they are often depicted as villains, largely because of their presumed Muslim background. This is in certain societies thought to lead to segregation, Islamic extremism and gender violence. Because they are fleeing from "less developed countries" bringing little money and assets with them, they are also presumed to drain welfare systems and create social differences and conflicts. This highlights the importance of not reinforcing images of refugees as victims. A constant emphasis on these aspects of their situation may lead to further skepticism among those who already fail to acknowledge that refugees are individuals with assets to society like anyone else.

To exemplify accountability in practice, Hoel uses the example of South-African women from her research that described marriages where violence had occurred. Yet, stories from the same marriages included romance, growth, self-confidence and sexuality[77]. She could not refrain from reacting to the ambiguity of these stories. However, neither could she refrain from retelling them. Both sides of these stories were equally important. Omitting one part of them would be omitting parts of the truth. According to principals of accountability, it is important in such a situation to consider how these stories are represented, something that becomes especially important working with stigmatized groups. Hoel reminds that accountability does not require you to leave out information, but requires you to openly reflect and discuss findings so that representations are thorough and truthful[78]. A study of religious expressions is

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[76] Ibid., p. 30
[77] Ibid., pp. 40-41
[78] Ibid., p. 30

one way to illustrate life in displacement, focusing on spatial expressions and practices rather than on someone's status as refugee per se. This might contribute to illustrate diversity rather than to confirm stereotypical depictions.

Partiality

Lastly, partiality refers to questions of difference and diversity. This means that researchers should avoid generalizing and acknowledge plurality of views and multiple subjectivities. Diversity is naturally more visible in some research than others, but it is important for researchers to include difference and diversity also when it does not appear visibly through the research alone[79]. Hoel uses the example of South-African women who use religious garment to cover their face first and foremost for security reasons. As muggings and robberies happen frequently in some areas, using religious garment make them less visible and create a sense of respect from some male criminals[80]. Hoel includes this point to highlight diversity, and the multiple and varying reasons and meanings for religious practice among religious people. While wearing this garment was explained with piety by some, it was a means of safety for others. This also portrays how differently lived and perceived realities shape observable practices and expressions[81]. As my own research was done in two out of 30 camps in Greece, it cannot claim to represent any one group or apply to all refugees or refugee camps. Only in the two camps I visited there were big differences in nationalities, group dynamic and the registered or unregistered status of refugees. As mentioned, the situation also differs between regions implying that the tendencies I observed might not reflect reality elsewhere. Also, as the topic of this thesis suggests, religious practice change in differing conditions. People do not bring the same religious, spiritual or any type of baggage with them into displacement. As in Hoel's example, one practice can mean and signify very different things for others. It is therefore important to emphasize that the findings and material discussed in this thesis is based on my own observations in the specific location and might not correspond with experiences and observations of others. Besides, the religious and spiritual lives of groups and individuals are personal and compound and cannot be extracted into something general as such. Thus, there are obvious limitations in scope to be reaching any conclusions.

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[79] Ibid., p. 30
[80] Ibid., p. 44
[81] Ibid., p. 44

Lastly, building this thesis on post-colonial theory, accountability also relates to refraining from the common mistake of attempting to represent a group that is neither homogenous enough to be represented, and that I with my role as researcher and my background cannot ever represent. As this is a thesis about possible interpretations of borderland religion, it is not an attempt to represent any one group or person. The perspective on a mobile phenomenon allows me to investigate one aspect of life in displacement that I interpret following a specific theoretical framework. It may be used to shed light on the conditions and tendencies that can take place inside a refugee camp. Hopefully, this can have an informative function and contribute to highlight life in displacement, a reality for millions of people. Still, the contribution is based on my own observation and interpretation and will not attempt to represent any specific groups or individuals.

4.6.2 Rapport

There are also methodological tools as part of the method to be considered. When engaging in the lives of groups and individuals, a certain level of mutuality needs to be established for them to open for research. For this to happen, trust and relation is needed. This goes for all qualitative research involving people, observation as much as interviews. While it would be important in interviews to familiarize with people so that they would feel comfortable talking to you, it is equally important in participant observation to make people feel comfortable having you around. This demands respect, presence and willingness, for instance through showing up, being available and engaging in what research subjects deem important. Doing this and establishing a respectful and mutual relation with your research subjects is called *rapport*[82], and is comparable to that of Nina Hoel's positionality. In my field, rapport demanded a certain hybridity between the three roles I inhabited. As a researcher I observed the field with a certain perspective, noting observations. Simultaneously I had to be helpful and available as a volunteer. However, most importantly I wished to be open and pay attention to the people I met by using time to talk to them. This was not formally related to any of the two professional roles but based on my personal values. Establishing rapport demanded me not only to do the task of the organization which was the main arena of contact between me and the refugees, but also to smile and be available to everyone I met in and outside of work. This also involved listening to what they said between conversations regarding distribution of food and formal things.

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[82]Harvey, Graham, 2013, p. 231

As we met several days every week, I would eventually build brief relations with some of the inhabitants. Some were more open than others, meaning I would not have conversations with everyone. Yet, even smiles from a distance would establish meaningful contact in my perspective, as it gave me a glimpse of that person whether we laughed at something together or shook our heads when it became chaotic. As our main task was to distribute meals, there was not too much time to do other things and especially not with everyone. However, the small moments of contact I got with those I never talked to still taught me something about the group. They were made visible through those moments of non-verbal contact in hectic situations.

4.6.3 Epochè and bias

Another important dimension of qualitative research is ***epochè**, and concerns researcher's ability to "bracket out" previous ideas, beliefs and values during a study[83]. This is crucial not only as a respectful minimum in the meeting with people of different beliefs, but also in the process of attaining new knowledge. A lack of epochè will in worst case distort results through a lack of objective approach. Traditionally, objectivity is deemed an important aspect of research. However, as I am using theories and methodologies where my own presence is part of the research matter, objectivity per se is not possible nor aimed for. It is also common to use the term bias when discussing objectivity in research. In research where the research subject, sharing life worlds and space, and embodied presence play important roles (See Wyller;Hoel;Rønsdal), the concept of bias becomes important. While epochè refers to a bracketing out of previous ideas, bias as research principle reflect one more the fact that researchers do have previous ideas and beliefs, yet that it is unlikely that all of these can be processed or excluded. Bias is an automatic cognitive feature of our judgement[84]. In contrast, bias in research suggests that there needs to be an awareness of these beliefs, and that it is the researcher's responsibility to be aware of this and openly work with them by reflecting and discussing them. An example of being aware of previous ideas is nuancing expectations about the field of research. In my own case, this meant to not "religionize" the field through expecting findings based on previous readings. Rather, it was important to be open to interpret the actual conditions and practices that took place. While bringing previous research and

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[83] Ibid. p. 232

[84] Bardon, Adrian, *The Truth About Denial: Bias and Self-Deception in Science, Politics and Religion,* Oxford Scholarship Online, September 2019, p. 13

knowledge into the field, I could still not know whether this was a reality in the places I visited. Also, as discussed above, refugees are often publicly depicted in certain ways, often as victims in a hopeless situation. This depiction does not inform about the diverse lives of those who are stuck in their situation. This was something to remember when entering the field and still it was something that "caught me off guard". The inhabitants of a refugee camp share the situation of having fled from their homes, living their lives jammed inside a camp and seeking a better future elsewhere. Therefore, they are referred to as one group of refugees. However, this depiction does not include all the individual and very different lives inside a refugee camp, that can never really be generalized. Yet, in the context of bias, this way of perceiving and presenting the situation is clearly influenced by my own bias and might differ greatly from another person with its own biases.

4.7 NSD/Norwegian Centre for Research Data

Research conducted by Norwegian institutions must be consulted and approved by Norwegian Centre for Research Data (frequently called NSD)[85]. NSD demands an overview of projects involving sensitive data about groups and/or individuals, including a thorough reasoning around choice of method and whether there are more forbearing alternatives of collecting data. I initially applied to NSD for both participant observation and interviews. Yet, as previously mentioned, interviews as method would have been harder to accomplish due to the practical framework of my work and stay, combined with formal regulations on research with vulnerable groups. Lastly, doing interviews and treating data related to vulnerable groups results in stricter rules and guidelines concerning storage of this data. My first application was rejected as it lacked sufficient long-term planning related to interviews.

This made me rethink the need for interviews as it was not strictly necessary in my study. I eliminated interviews and changed my method to participant observation only, as this would give more comprehensive findings. As participant observation focuses on the observable and interpretable, I found it to be a more "available" and implementable method as it did not rely on sensitive data or active participation. Everyone involved is kept anonymous in this thesis, including names of people, locations, nationalities and religious denominations of individuals. No information of individual or sensitive character can be gathered from this thesis.

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[85] https://nsd.no/nsd/english/index.html

After removing interviews as part of the research method and precising anonymity, my application was admitted given that data is stored in compliance with Norwegian laws on data material and privacy. If only anonymous data is treated, there is no requirements to apply to NSD. NSD responded positively to informing the inhabitants of the camp about the observation through a poster, as it was good research ethics. However, it was not a requirement. As this thesis is only treating anonymous data, storage of data on a local hard disk has not been a requirement. Still, data has been shared over private and regulated folders. NSD will follow up to see if correct measures of storage and privacy have been taken after the ending of this project.

4.8 Summing up chapter 4

I have in this chapter presented my methodology, being participant observation and the reasoning behind this choice of method. I have also discussed some of the practical and ethical implications of using such a method, and I have given an account of the process of applying for approval of my research project by the Norwegian Center for Research Data. Additional ethical reflections are further discussed in chapter 8 after a presentation of the theoretical framework in the following chapters.

In the coming chapter, a presentation of post-colonial theory as the theoretical framework of this thesis will follow.

5.0 Post-colonial theory

This thesis builds on post-colonial theory and thinking. I will in this chapter present post-colonial theory. I will also introduce three central post-colonial thinkers and their works that have had special relevance to this thesis and will continue to be applied in the coming chapters.

5.1 Post-colonial theory explained

Post-colonial theory can generally be described as a "studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies as well as the level of more general global developments thought to be the after-effect of empire"[86]. The project of post-colonialism is to critically analyze social, political, cultural and economic structures, and reveal the many ways hegemonic and inequal power relations are sustained. It studies contemporary societies and history, and is used as an analytical method in a range of fields like literature, history, art, philosophy, political science and religion. Most relevant for this thesis, it aims at re-reading and re-writing history as well as improving contemporary discourses to integrate the voices of those who have been and still are marginalized through hegemonic power relations[87].

Post-colonial theory constitutes the theoretical backdrop of this thesis and is source of fundamental concepts, terms and thinking. Concepts like agency, subaltern and critical reflections about refugee camps derive from post-colonial thinkers such as Gayatri Spivak, Giorgio Agamben and Federico Settler. All three are central contributors to the content of this thesis. Each demonstrate post-colonial thinking in their accounts, yet all in different ways. In the following sections I will introduce these post-colonial thinkers and their contributions.

5.2 Gayatri Spivak

Background

Gayatri Spivak is a post-colonial and feminist thinker from India. Born into a colonized and segregated country some years before India's independence, she has contributed with knowledge and perspectives on social, political and gendered inequality[88]. After graduating in India, she moved to the US and started influencing on a global scale both within and outside

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[86] Quayson, Ato, *Postcolonialism – Theory, Practice or Process,* Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 2
[87] Settler, Federico, 2018, p. 103
[88] Landry, Donna & MacLean, Gerald, *Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,* Routledge, New York, 1996, pp. 2-3

academic circles. She demonstrated in her writings how the empowered, being everyone from colonists to men and privileged third world citizens, through their language, discourse and diverse forms of power, sustained a system of colonization and oppression towards the ones she calls *the subaltern*[89], referring to underprivileged and subordinated groups globally.

Re-writing history and voicing the voiceless

Reflecting the fundamental project of post-colonialism, much of her work concerns the once colonized people of her homeland India. This is a group there are hardly reproductions of, about or by in historical literature about the colonial era. All history is written on the experience of the imperialists, something that maintains hegemony in terms of knowledge production[90]. If allowed to go unchallenged, we will only know how history was perceived from the perspective of the empowered but never by other groups. Belonging to a category of subaltern herself as a previously colonized woman, it has been important to Spivak to integrate the voice of those who historically have been voiceless.

In her most famous work, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), Spivak elaborates on those specific matters. She gives an overview of the different ways privileged and often Western groups and individuals fail in their attempt to represent subaltern and underprivileged groups, referring to blindness and passiveness towards fundamental factors privileging the Western world. Examples are exploitation of third world labor and resources[91]. Her main point, answering her title and own rhetoric question, is that the subaltern cannot speak or truly be heard because they do not speak in a way that matters to "the first world"[92]. If they could, they would cease to be subaltern because we would in fact listen and act[93]. However, it does not happen as we do not listen. Spivak defines the subaltern as those lacking political autonomy as a group, a description I find pertinent to the situation of today's refugees. This is relatable to Giorgio Agamben's concept of political relevance in biopolitics, something that will be resumed in the next chapter.

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[89] Ibid., pp. 2-3
[90] Ibid. pp. 2-3
[91] Spivak, Gayatri, "Can the Subaltern Speak*?",* in Nelson, Cary & Grossberg, Lawrence (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana, University of Illinois, 1988
[92] Wyller, Trygve, "Touching and Contamination: What the xenophobes want to avoid – Reflections from a Congolese borderland in South Africa", in Machado, Daisy, Turner, Bryan & Wyller, Trygve (eds.), *Borderland Religion – Ambiguous Practices of Difference, Hope and Beyond,* Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 2018, pp. 88-98, p. 87
[93] Landry, Donna & MacLean, Gerald, 1996, p. 5

Spivak's demonstration of this hierarchical world order is relevant in the context of the refugee crisis because it highly reflects the situation of European refugees. The European society is aware of the situation of refugees living in European territory but are yet unable or/and unwilling to assist in improving their situation. Instead, high fees are paid and quotas are pushed within the European Parliament to allow states to refrain from taking part in their responsibility[94]. Although it is known that people suffer globally because of dynamics relating to European politics, such as those mentioned by Spivak, that does not seem to make a difference as it concerns a group that does not possess political and economic relevance in Europe. Thus, despite political campaigns and other democratic attempts to achieve attention from the European society, they are unable to speak in a way that really matter to us.

5.3 Giorgio Agamben

Background

Giorgio Agamben is professor in law and philosophy from Italy. His most famous contributions have been those concerning bio-politics and in this context specifically his book *Homo Sacer* (1995). Here, he introduces political and philosophical concepts applied by many in the field of migration. I will now introduce his works relevant for this thesis.

Homo Sacer

In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben introduces the concept of bio-politics. This concept builds on a differentiation between political life (zoe) and biological life (bios), a differentiation Agamben claims is central to contemporary democratic societies. According to Agamben, this differentiation creates a paradox seldom more visible than in the case of refugees. Through this differentiation, biological life itself lacks value without political relevance[95]. Thus, biological life itself is worthless without political relation, even in politics created to protect bare life, such as citizenship. If we combine this with Spivak's concept of the subaltern, this means that groups and individuals without political autonomy remain not only voiceless but also in a fierce sense valueless as their lives do not matter to us in the same way as those who share our political relevance. The bare lives of people without homes, capital or citizenships, are not enough for the system that ironically has advanced in an attempt to protect such life. Further on, the people that these rights were merely created for, namely people in need of

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[94] "Refugee Protection in Europe and neighbouring areas – trends and scenarios", Seminar at Fafo Conference Center, Oslo, Norway, 7/11-2019, https://fafo.no/index.php/arrangementer/arrangementer/item/refugees

[95] Agamben, Giorgio, *Homo Sacer – Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, California, 1998, pp. 127-128

protection for their lives such as refugees, instead become symbols of the system's dysfunctionality[96].

State of Exception

One of Agamben's second most well-known concepts is that of the *state of exception.* Shortly summarized, the state of exception is a juridical concept, a state of emergency that suspends regular laws and rights for what is supposed to be a limited time frame. It is usually ordered by a sovereign power. Although originally deriving from ancient Rome, Agamben uses an example from Germany in the aftermath of first world war to demonstrate. Here, Article 48 of the Weimar constitution sounded the following: "The president of the Reich may, in the case of a grave disturbance or threat to public security and order, make the decisions necessary to reestablish public security, if necessary with the aid of armed forces. To this end he may provisionally suspend… fundamental rights …" [97]. This use of the state of exception and its suspension of ordinary laws resulted in concentration camps all over Germany both before and during the second world war. Examples are the infamous Nazi camps, all reasoned with national security in a state of emergency[98].

Referring mainly to the 20th century concentration camps, Agamben writes about these camps specifically that "The camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule"[99]. This is a reflection that has been used by other scholars to compare the state of exception as explained above to the situation of modern refugee camps. In other words, the state of exception, originally thought as a temporary suspension of rules reasoned with security, is often given permanent spatial arrangements and gradually becomes a state of normality, as can be seen in the situation of refugee camps all over the world[100]. Considering this in a biopolitical perspective suggests that the introductory altering of fundamental rights for exceptional reasons of security, is what creates spaces such as refugee camps where abnormality gradually becomes the norm, and where possibilities to speak or express agency is hardly existing[101].

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[96] Ibid., p. 126
[97] Ibid., p. 167
[98] Ibid., p. 167
[99] Ibid., p. 169
[100] Ibid., p. 168
[101] Wyller, Trygve, "A spatial Power that dissolves itself: Space, Empathy, and Theology – when the Colonized Enter the Empire"*,* in Sander, Hans Joachim, Villadsen, Kaspar & Wyller, Trygve (eds.) *The Spaces of Others – Heterotopic Spaces*, Research in Contemporary Religion, vol. 21, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2016, pp. 59-78, p. 71

The state of exception if not reflects, at least illustrates the situation of European refugee camps, as thousands of refugees are stuck in camps that were never made for anyone to live permanently. It is well-known that these camps do not meet standards of basic human rights. The state of exception is thus relevant to analyze the situation of modern refugee camps. It is also used and further developed by other contemporary post-colonial scholars such as Federico Settler. This will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

5.4 Federico Settler

Background

Federico Settler is associate professor in Sociology of African Religions at the University of Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa. In his text *A post-colonial perspective on religion and migration* (2018) which I mainly build on here, he is concerned with the post-colonial dimension of migration, in seeking to promote migrant agency through changing stereotypical and negative depictions of migrants[102]. He does this by presenting migrants' use of religion as ways of resisting Western pressure of assimilation and as means of authentic expression. For this thesis, this work will be particularly relevant.

Religion in post-colonial theory

To Settler, religion in post-colonial perspective refers both to religious traditions located in post-colonized countries, but also traditions that have migrated and are practiced in host countries, particularly in Europe and the West[103]. Settler defines post-colonialism as a position against Eurocentrism, as alternative means of expression for those living in Europe without sharing Eurocentric norms and expressions[104]. Hence, he considers deviating religious expressions in European countries as a form of resistance.

Post-colonial production of knowledge

Settler upholds that hierarchy is sustained through knowledge production, meaning that power is reproduced through what we learn and how we learn it. He therefore suggests that it is not enough to only critique the relation between power and knowledge, but that we must also

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[102] Settler, Federico, 2018
[103] Settler, Federico, "Orientalism and Religion: The Question of Subject Agency", *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Brill, 2002, pp. 249-264, p. 250
[104] Ibid., p. 250

offer alternative knowledge through integrating experiences of "the Other"[105] into our scheme of knowledge[106]. Thus, post-colonial studies are directed at providing knowledge that offer alternatives to conventional world views. In the context of religion, this implies widening the term religion to include more than a "Christian normative, theistic"[107] definition of the term, normalizing and respecting other forms of religious expression. This thesis seeks to follow this tradition and contribute with alternative explanations of religion in its focus on borderland religion.

Post-colonial perspective on borderland religion

Settler's text *A post-colonial perspective on religion and migration* introduces post-colonial theory in the context of religion and migration. This has been a highly relevant and useful contribution in my study of borderland religion. I have been using this text and Settler's perspective on borderland religion as a theoretical starting point. A presentation of his argumentation will now follow.

From a post-colonial perspective, migration is a consequence of global hegemonic relations of power. Religion is an inevitable dimension of this migration. It is therefore appropriate to use a post-colonial perspective when investigating matters of migration and religion. Following this reasoning, Federico Settler uses religion as a tool to reveal and illustrate migrant agency; identity, autonomy and will among the many people that for various reason flee or migrate from their homes. This contrasts the widespread perception of migrants from third world countries migrating to Europe only to attain a more Western way of living and to be part of a Western society[108]. Using religion as an optic can nuance this perception and reveal more authentic identities and self-perceptions among groups that in most discourses are discussed as "only" migrants or refugees[109]. It can also provide insight to the experience of migrating. Eventually, this might expand our ideas about religion and how it operates in varying conditions.

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[105] The term used to describe the other part in the encounter between our self and someone unfamiliar and different from us.
[106] Settler, Federico, 2018, p. 103
[107] Ibid., p. 100
[108] Ibid. 103
[109] Ibid., p. 100

Settler focuses on how religion is invoked, reconfigured and reproduced as consequence of migration and displacement[110]. When people move, they bring their religion with them. However, unlike others, he suggests that religion is not only tradition – "a fixed set of belief and practices…that can be "unpacked" at the point of settlement"[111], but rather something that is reformed in response to migration, namely because of migration[112]. These are aspects of his contribution to the concept of borderland religion[113].

Settler draws on Giorgio Agamben's previously mentioned state of exception. Building on Agamben, Settler draws parallels between the state of exception and the situation of modern refugee camps. For Settler, refugee camps are states of exception, meaning places outside our ordinary juridical, moral and ethical frameworks. However, Settler develops this concept further and claims that due to this exceptional character of these places, they become zones where conventional ways of being and thinking are challenged. In the context of religion, Settler thus suggests that refugee camps are places where religion is progressively contested and reformed. In the camps, religious practice become ways to "assert religious ways of knowing and being that emerge from life in the borderland"[114] and sites for resisting the narrow and one-sided depiction of refugees. This philosophy will be informing the discussions and interpretations of this thesis.

5.5 What is agency?

The term agency is a central term in post-colonial studies and appear frequently in post-colonial work. The definition of the term depends on the discipline, but in social sciences the term refers to human determination consisting of will, identity, habits and imagination that makes an individual his own agent with his actions reflecting his will, together constituting his agency. Agency can be defined as the capacity of an individual to act independently according to their own free choices, otherwise constrained by the opposite of agency, namely structures, created by factors of influence such as class, gender, religious background, ability etc. that limit or determine an agent's decisions[115].

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[110] Ibid., p 100
[111] Ibid., p. 100
[112] Ibid., p. 100
[113] Machado, Daisy, Turner, Bryan S. & Wyller, Trygve, 2018
[114] Ibid., p. 99
[115] Barker, Chris, *Making Sense of Cultural Studies – Central Problems and Critical Debates,* Sage Publications, London and California, 2002, pp. 86-94

What is important in this context is the agent's ability to engage, act and express according to own will despite structural surroundings. Agency can therefore be conceived as a person's expression of identity and free will, therefore also as a means of resistance. When Settler tries to reveal migrant agency, he attempts to illustrate how religion is expressed by migrants in different structural circumstances and thus, consciously or unconsciously, used to make individual choices regardless of limiting and restraining surroundings.

5.6 Summing up chapter 5

I have in this chapter given an account of post-colonial theory and thinking, which constitutes the theoretical framework of this thesis. I have introduced three post-colonial thinkers; Gayatri Spivak, Giorgio Agamben and Federico Settler, that are influential in the field of migration and have offered central terms and perspectives on the topic of this thesis. I have also presented the term agency, which appears frequently in post-colonial work and in the rest of my material.

I will in the following present spatial theory which will inform the discussion of this thesis.

6.0 Spatial Theory

I will in this chapter present spatial theory which will be informing this thesis as an analytical tool. A detailed elaboration of spatial theory will now follow.

6.1 Theory of spatial production explained

Spatial analysis based on Henri Lefebvre's theory of production of space have been central to this thesis. However, because his theories are written in another context, I have worked with Kaia Rønsdal's (2017) introduction to this spatial interpretation. In the following, I will introduce Rønsdal's comprehensive introduction to this way of thinking, before further elaborating on Lefebvre's concepts.

Referring to Henri Lefebvre's theory of spatial production, Rønsdal differentiates between place and space; place being simply a location whilst space is the different factors that turn a place into a particular space[116]. According to Lefebvre, space is something that its users or inhabitants do, a practice more than a location[117]. The production of space happens through this practice and makes the space a continuous process of sociality rather than a finalized product[118]. Lefebvre developed a model consisting of three interdependent levels of spatial analysis that can be used to inform our knowledge about the social production of space. To illustrate the complexity of space, Rønsdal uses the example of a public park. A public park would only have been a green, empty spot without the different people that use the park for their preferred activities. The different people that use a park all produce it through the activities that take place there. Through people's usage of the park, be it playing ball or frisbee, grilling, drinking or sun-bathing, a park becomes the park the way we know it[119]. These are the spatial practices of a park, relating to the first level of the triadic model. However, the production of a space is also connected with the two other levels. For instance, the open and inviting design of a park combined with its often green and organic appearance are both influential factors to how people make use of it. These are factors related to representation of space, namely the second level of the triadic model[120]. Representations of a park can be maps, design and plans regarding how we think about the park as location. Lastly,

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[116] Rønsdal, Kaia, «Hverdagsmarginalisering og bytilhørighet», i Lid, Inger Marie & Wyller, Trygve (eds.) *Rom og Etikk – Fortellinger om Ambivalens,* Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2017, pp. 55-72, p. 58

[117] Ibid.p. 59

[118] Zieleniec, Andrzej, *Henri Lefebvre: The Production of Space* in *Space and Social Theory,* Sage Publications, 2008, London, pp. 60-97, p. 62

[119] Rønsdal, Kaia, 2017, p. 58

[120] Ibid., p. 58

the park with all its activities and visitors consists of social encounters and relationships available to those who are there, both intended and not. On this level, related to the third and lived dimension of space, the space is firstly shared and then lived together by those present. However, as this relates to the experience of being there, it is therefore the most difficult level to analyze as it is part of an experience. Nevertheless, I find the triadic model a useful way to explore how social processes and practices, such as those of borderland religion, come to take place the way they do in given spaces, for instance a refugee camp. I will elaborate further on the triadic model in the following.

6.2 Lefebvre's triadic model of spatial analysis

Lefebvre's triadic model of spatial analysis consists of the three levels briefly described above. Space can be analyzed on each level separately, yet the levels are interdependent and equally constitutive to the production of space[121].

The first level, the *perceived space* also called *spatial practice,* refers to the "physical and material flows (of individuals, goods or commodities), circulations, transfers and interactions that occur in and across space, structured in such a way as to assure social life is produced and reproduced"[122]. In my own research, this level can be understood as everything that goes on in the refugee camp. The central word is practice, implying the activity and action taking place in a space. On this level, space is formative for social life in the sense of being "spatial sets of characteristics of each social formation"[123], shaping the practices that take place inside it. In this way, it can be understood as the basis for spatial practice. Analyzing the refugee camp from the first level of the triadic model, everything going on is potentially relevant. There is much spatial practice going on, for instance in the big main hall of the camp that was occupied by men selling basic necessities. This created what could look like a center inside the camp. Men, sometimes with their kids, hung out, talked and spent their days there. Their occupation of that room, however, led the women of the camp to move outside in the sun, lacking similar rooms to occupy. Their organization and clear division of that space contributed to create the outdoor space a women's space where multiple women sat barefoot, comfortably shaded from the sun, talking with each other and on the phones. Although there was a playground reserved for kids, the kids were continuously spread around the building

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[121] Ibid., p.60
[122] Zieleniec, Andrzej, 2008, p. 70
[123] Zieleniec, Andrzej, 2008, p. 69

alone or in smaller or bigger groups, using the building itself with its open layout as a playground. All of these practices are part of the first level of spatial analysis. The refugee camp as a space can be understood and explored through these practices and the organization of social life within the camp.

The second level of the triadic model, the *conceived space* also called *representations of space*, refers to the way a space is represented and planned. Compared to the first level, this level relates more to the idea behind a space; the aim and purpose of a space and how these have been put to place for us to use and conceive. As planning and representation mostly is done by those who govern a space, power and ideology can be analyzed through this level[124]. In the planning of a park, architects might design parks in ways that do not encourage loitering through using specific types of benchs and seats. Looking at the refugee camp, it is reasonable to assume that the warehouse building that was the camp was never designed to house people. The space was planned for industrial purposes, and as a warehouse building it might be perfect; vast, cool and relatively isolated. However, the same traits make the building unsuited for living conditions, especially as a permanent home. Seeing this building for the first time, questions about how and why we could place vulnerable people in a place clearly unsuited for living appeared to me. Considering this, the discrepancy between the planned purpose of that building versus its actual use, one can question the background and context of the fact that families, children and adolescents are placed to live their lives inside this building. Can it tell us anything about power and ideology? This also means that the way these camps are represented through photographs, reportages and reports influence how we think about the camps and those who live there. Thus, the representations of these camps also influence international and national politics about the future and lives of these people.

The third level of the triadic model is called the *lived space*, or *spaces of representation*. It refers to the social, symbolic dimensions of space, meaning social processes and events that take place when we share and live space[125]. We find in this level the invisible, symbolic aspects of a space, such as moods, social dynamics, values and norms[126]. To portray lived space, Trygve Wyller uses the example of a church. He claims that it is not only a church's existence, its appearance or availability alone that constitute its role. These things relate to the

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[124] Rønsdal, Kaia, 2017, pp. 60-61
[125] Zieleniec, Andrzej, 2008, p. 11
[126] Rønsdal, Kaia, 2018, p. 61

first and second level of the triadic model. Rather, it is the activities and people that fill it, meaning the specific things that take place inside it and is shared and experienced by its users. This is what defines a space[127]. However, to explore and learn anything about dimensions of lived space, relations and socialities that fill a space and are shared and experienced by its' users, one must oneself be part of this sharing and experiencing, according to Wyller (2016) and Rønsdal (2017) whose interpretations I build on. This further emphasizes the importance of being present as researcher in research that aims at using spatial analysis. Without sharing and experiencing lived space, which in a way constitutes the social character of a space, understanding of fundamental dimensions of production of space is omitted. In a refugee camp, analysis on this level allows us to look closer and share the life that is lived inside that camp, specifically by those who live in it. Which practices appear from having to live life in such conditions? How are the encounters that take place there constitutive for the refugee camp as we know it? These questions can only be approached by being part of those encounters to observe the practices I wish to explore. Only in this way am I able to say something about aspects of the lives taking place in the refugee camp. Without sharing lived space, statements about life in refugee camps would be based on interpretations of imagination and speculation. The events and observations referred to in this thesis is based on my own experiences of living and sharing the space of the refugee camp.

As my research concerns explorations of matters that may not be visible at first glance, the analytical level of lived space is useful because it allows for exploration of more complex social processes such as culture and resistance[128]. This becomes particularly relevant in the study of vulnerable groups and will be elaborated in the coming chapters[129].

In my own observation, this spatial analysis was useful to discover how spiritual and religious life inside that camp was influenced by its spatial context. To give an example, an inhabitant of the camp stated that she would not use the camp space for religious purposes as it was neither clean nor silent enough for religious purposes. This can be interpreted as if the space itself, meaning the perceived and conceived dimensions, directly influenced her religious expression. The same person highlighted compassion and humanity as a now vital part of religious practice. This can be interpreted as a form of resistance towards her otherwise harsh

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[127] Wyller, Trygve, 2016
[128] Rønsdal, Kaia, 2017, p. 61
[129] Ibid., p. 61

spatial surroundings, developed in the lived dimension of that space because of her emotional experiences and encounters with co-inhabitants. However, without sharing the experience of the camp and its' conditions with this inhabitant, I would not have been able to understand the content of this statement. Yet, the experience of being inside the camp to observe the physical conditions she referred to, while simultaneously experiencing the humanity she emphasized, gave me access to information that enabled me to understand how humanity could be interpreted as a prevalent practice in that context. Another example is how spaces originally reserved for religious use gradually turned in to homes for refugees. Being present to see how a marquee decorated with religious quotes in Arabic was now full of people simply living everyday lives, offered me an understanding of how the living of lives is organized inside the camp and which implications this may have for traditional religious practice.

These examples will be resumed in the discussion in chapter 10. However, following the theory of production of space, the refugee camp itself becomes a decisive factor in how religion and spirituality is expressed within it. The expressions I investigate cannot be separated from the conditions and circumstances they are surrounded by. As in this thesis, religious expressions and practices can be explored as practices related to their respective space. Spatial theory lets us analyze how expressions of religion and processes of resistance may appear in the specific spatial context of the camps. Also, as spatial theory can be used to explore the lived dimensions of that space, it offers information about life in refugee camps that is not attainable through other theories.

6.3 Theorizing lived space: Trygve Wyller and the spaces of others

An example of how space can be analyzed on the level of lived space is Trygve Wyller's analysis of the humanitarian project of Rosengrenska. This is a project that takes place in the church of Bergsjön in Sweden[130]. In his analysis of this space, Wyller introduces the Foucauldian concept of heterotopias: spaces that contest society at large by offering alternative and accepting counter-sites for marginalized groups, such as migrants and refugees[131]. The concept of heterotopia is broad and to this day widely disputed, but I will not discuss the meaning of this concept further in this thesis. Rather, I will operate with Wyller's interpretation to enrich an analysis of space.

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[130] Wyller, Trygve, 2016
[131] Ibid., p. 68

Rosengrenska is a project consisting of humanitarian volunteers teamed up with a Lutheran church outside of Gothenburg, Sweden. Once a week, they offer the church space for so-called irregular migrants (migrants without papers), offering services related to health, law and economy for one. Illegal immigrants have no access to such services normally as they cannot consult state institutions like hospitals without risking deportation if their undocumented status is discovered[132]. Neither do they have access to many other facilities without the same risk, meaning they live life largely outside of ordinary society.

Wyller analyzes the space of Rosengrenska using the triadic model of spatial production. On the level of lived spaces, he interprets Rosengrenska in Foucauldian terms as a heterotopic space based on its acceptance towards the "otherness" of these marginalized migrants. However, he does so by himself being present, observing and experiencing the practices of the project and talking to both its workers, users and visitors about their shared experiences of the project. Wyller's point in terms of spatial analysis is that this space is not created by the fact that it is placed inside a church that has as its mission to help people in need, nor that it is built on the humanitarian principles of Rosengrenska. It is based on the people that inhabit the space, both the users and the volunteers, the activities that fill it and the encounters that take place there[133]. To portray this point, Wyller refers to a conversation between the leaders of the project. When trying to pinpoint the essence of the project since it was going so well and had been for many years, the leader of the humanitarian organization struggled to put to words what it was that surpassed the dimension of mere human rights as it was clearly "something more"[134]. The answer to this might be multifaceted, but analyzed with spatial theory, one could argue that something taking place in the lived space of the project, shared by the users and the volunteers may be what constitutes that "more".

6.4 Summing up chapter 6

I have in this chapter introduced Henri Lefebvre's theory of spatial production as interpreted by Kaia Rønsdal. I have presented Lefebvre's triadic model of spatial analysis, consisting of three analytical levels for exploration of spaces. I have also used the example of heterotopic spaces as presented by Trygve Wyller to illustrate how the meaning and function of a space can be interpreted from the level of lived space.

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[132] Ibid. pp. 62-63
[133] Ibid. pp. 59
[134] Ibid., pp. 61-62

I will in the following chapter present four examples of borderland religion to illustrate how it can be interpreted.

7.0 Four examples of borderland religion

I will in this chapter give examples of previous interpretations of borderland religion to demonstrate the concept. Federico Settler uses specifically two examples to demonstrate his interpretation of borderland religion. I will present these in the following together with another example from Daisy Machado[135], a scholar that have contributed to the field of borderland religion, and one of my own observations from the church of Bergsjön as mentioned in the chapter above.

7.1 The Makeshift Church in Calais' Jungle Camp

One of Settler's examples of borderland religion is the makeshift church in the so-called jungle camp in Calais, France during the 2015 refugee crisis. Among tents and improvised homes in an unofficial refugee camp, a church was built by displaced migrants out of tarpaulin and wooden sticks[136]. The church was discussed in media as a "place of raw prayer and defiant hope"[137]. However, Settler claims this rhetoric kept depicting the migrants who built the church as victims, whose only means was to pray and hope. By overlooking the time, work, planning, thoughts and ideas that was put into the church's making[138], the public discourse reinforced a stereotypical view of migrants as victims with no means to influence their situation.

Settler on the other hand uses this example to show how the migrants quite creatively expressed their agency in that situation and resisted a role as voiceless victims. They did this by building a counter-space alternating their surroundings, using the scarce resources they had and basing it on symbols they themselves defined as valuable. Seen in this way, they refrained from subordinating to the degrading character of the situation through manifesting their presence and expressing their identity through the building of this church. Thus, they redefined their own roles in the situation. Their religion became a way to express the fact that they have agency in a situation that does not acknowledge that fact. In other words, the making of the makeshift church demonstrated that migrants in displacement are more than victims and that they can do more than to hope. This offers as an example of how religion can

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[135] Machado, Daisy, "Santa Muerte – A transgressing saint transgresses borders in Borderland Religion – Ambiguous Practices of Difference, Hope and Beyond", in Machado, Daisy, Turner, Bryan S. & Wyller, Trygve (eds.), *Borderland Religion – Ambiguous Practices of Difference, Hope and Beyond,* Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2018, London and New York, pp. 65-74
[136] Settler, Federico, 2018, p. 101
[137] Settler, Federico, 2018, p. 101
[138] Ibid. p. 101

be used to illustrate migrant agency. In this example, Settler presents religion as a "counter-narrative" to the state of exception that refugees live in, such as the refugee camp. He proposes that the state of exception opens for productive and creative responses from the people that are forced into that situation[139]. The building of a makeshift church is an example of one such response[140]. Interpreting this using borderland religion thesis, the building of the Calais jungle church can be interpreted as an expression of borderland religion because it serves as an example of expressions of religion and spirituality that appear when religion and migration intersect.

7.2 The migration of Santa Muerte

Another example of practices appearing in the intersection between religion and migration, is the rise in popularity of Santa Muerte. Daisy Machado describes how the Mexican pseudo-saint Santa Muerte has attained popularity among Mexican migrants crossing the border from Mexico to the US[141]. Santa Muerte (Saint Death in English) is the only female saint representing death in Latin-American tradition. She is recognized by her skeleton figure and black gown, often accompanied by a scythe[142]. Her popularity is steadily rising. Unorthodox beliefs and rituals are widespread in Mexico, which is otherwise a strictly Catholic nation. However, Santa Muerte has been condemned by the Catholic church and is therefore delegitimized in traditional Christian religiosity[143]. It is for the same reasons that Santa Muerte receives so much attention from migrants and other marginalized groups, namely because they identify with her unconventional role as an outsider to the norm and someone in between legality and illegality. Her symbolization of death and her slightly scary skeleton looks represents the less celebrated dimensions of life that nevertheless are a reality for many people. Many live a life in poverty and are forced into violence and criminality, meaning they balance survival between life and death.

Crossing the border from Mexico to the US entails a life in alienation and condemnation for many. They await a dangerous journey on the border between Mexico and US. Santa Muerte is therefore considered a borderland saint because she accompanies those who cross that border. Through her representation of death, she makes the ones who are forced to do that

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[139] Ibid. p. 106
[140] Ibid. p. 106
[141] Machado, Daisy, 2018, pp. 65-74
[142] Ibid., p. 65
[143] Ibid., p. 65

journey feel safer in her company. Then she accompanies them in exclusion and loneliness after crossing. As Machado writes, she crosses the borders together with those who are awaiting harsh repercussions and violence from the US border patrol[144]. Furthermore, she also crosses borders of "social location, identity, and even the borders of what is considered orthodox religion"[145]. She is worshipped because she does not judge, and she embraces what is outside normality. She provides a religious response to those that as migrants in the U.S. context awaits marginality, rejection, racism, exploitation and loneliness[146].

The figure of Santa Muerte portrays how extreme and challenging life conditions can influence people's religious beliefs and spiritual needs. It also shows the need to expand definitions and representations of religion to reflect those who stand outside ordinary society.

7.3 The Johannesburg Methodist Church

Federico Settler also uses the example of Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg that became shelter for thousands of east-African refugees during a public attack on migrants. In a political project to clean up South Africa from foreigners, violent attacks were not only approved but encouraged, making the country dangerous for the many foreigners that live there[147]. Johannesburg Central Methodist Church opened its doors and housed fearful migrants for years. Although this originally was done based on the theological convictions of the church, these were soon challenged as the situation pushed the boundaries of a church's presumed function and responsibility[148].

As the church gradually became the home of many migrants, the migrants moved their social, cultural and economic lives into the church ground. This would get in the way of the church's original program, so that they for one would not be able to do services as they used to. The everyday lives of the refugees would claim the church space and alter the otherwise sacred character of it. This created frustration among church members and a dilemma for the church which eventually had to re-evaluate its choice. The situation forced the church to reflect on its function. What was the function and the responsibility of a church in the given situation - a shelter for the many migrants in need, or a space for sacred symbols and rituals? What when

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[144] Ibid., p. 65
[145] Ibid. p. 71
[146] Ibid. p. 71
[147] Settler, Federico, 2018, pp. 104-105
[148] Ibid., p. 104

the two happened to collide? After housing over 30 000 refugees over a period of 8 years, they eventually had to move[149].

Settler points to the fact that like the makeshift church in Calais, the church in Johannesburg offered a counter-narrative to the otherwise brutal situation in South-Africa that the migrants and refugees found themselves in. In that sense, the church *resisted,* using the church space as a means of resistance to the surrounding society, similar to that of heterotopic spaces as mentioned in the previous chapter. However, as the situation also sparked discussions about the function of a church and the proper use of a sacred space, it also contributed to reform the church's practices as a result of the situation[150].

7.4 Bergsjön Church in Gothenburg, Sweden

The fourth example is from my own study trip to Gothenburg, Sweden, where we visited the urban church of Bergsjön, previously described in the accounts of Trygve Wyller[151]. Bergsjön is a town located slightly outside of Gothenburg, Sweden's second biggest city. The city has a high rate of migrants and non-Swedes; one third of the population are not Swedish and they live in parts of the city like Bergsjön[152].

The church in Bergsjön experienced a decline in memberships and participation over the years, as the local community no longer reflected the Lutheran-Evangelical denomination of the Swedish church. Eventually, the church was confronted with a choice: to shut down or reach out to the whole community, migrants as well as Swedes. Like the Johannesburg Methodist Church, Bergsjön had to reevaluate their grounds and concluded that they wished to maintain a vital function for the local community, whether it consisted of Christian Swedes or not.

As the number of school drop-outs was high in the town, Bergsjön started arranging study groups in the church, open for everybody. At first, they were met by skepticism from families from other religious belongings. However, the church answered by opening for the rest of the

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[149] Ibid., pp. 104-108
[150] Ibid. pp, 107-108
[151] Wyller, Trygve, 2016
[152] Wyller, Trygve, 2016, pp. 60-61
https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/J1oER/politiet-disse-segregerte-forstedene-utgjoer-en-akutt-terrortrussel, (entered 9.3.2020 at 12:04)

city as well, through language courses and other open events. Today, besides serving various services for the city's inhabitants, Bergsjön opens once a week together with the previously mentioned Rosengrenska project and becomes a center for unregistered migrants. One day every week, this event offers legal advice, medical help, food and other services for the ones who do not receive this any other place.

At the time of my visit, which was the day of the Rosengrenska project, the church was filled with people from all nationalities. Some families and bigger groups, others alone. Some had been there before, others were there seeking help for the first time. Some were there for legal advisory, others for medicines, and some to pick up bags of groceries. The church cooperated with volunteers from all sectors; lawyers, doctors, nurses, social workers and civil volunteers. The humanitarian organization that had started the concept together with the church admitted they had been skeptical towards cooperating with a religious institution. Still, they had been operative for over fifteen years now. The church room was full of different languages and different religious backgrounds, reflecting the different groups and identities that visit the church. The posters, signs and the religious writings on the walls were of multiple languages.

The case of Bergsjön is exceptional on many levels as you do not find many similar spaces and practices in the region. One dimension of the case I find particularly special is the fact that although the police knows that Bergsjön is crammed with irregular migrants every week, they still leave the church undisturbed. Throughout its many years of operation, the police have not interfered once. The Bergsjön and Rosengrenska collaboration is thus an example of borderland religion as it represents practices that appear in the intersection between religion and migration, whether one chooses to focus on the church, the migrants or the police.

7.5 Summing up chapter 7

I have in this chapter given examples of borderland religion and the various ways it can be interpreted. Borderland religion sheds light on the different ways in which religion can be interpreted in the context of migration, and thus looks specifically at practices and expressions that appear through migration and displacement. This way of studying religion will be informing my further work.

I will in the following discuss ethical reflections related to my research.

8.0 Ethical reflections

I will in this chapter reflect on some of the ethical aspects of my research. As this research concerns a vulnerable and stigmatized group in a disputed context, these reflections constitute a large and important part of the research. Several aspects related to my role inside the refugee camp and my encounters with the refugees needs to be discussed. I have briefly discussed certain ethical matters related to the method applied in the chapter about methodology. I will in this chapter therefore discuss the more overarching matters and situations that appeared in the field. I have placed this chapter behind the chapters about theory and methodology namely due to the need to clarify terms and methodological concerns before elaborating on ethical dimensions.

8.1 Transparency

Doing research and volunteering at the same time creates ethical dilemmas that relate to transparency. If research subjects are insufficiently informed about the research taking place, it easily falls into a category of covert observation which should only be done when strictly necessary due to its obvious ethical implications. In covert observation, subjects are not aware they are being studied. Thus, information is attained without the subject's consent, and the subject has no control over which information will be used and for which purposes. This is ethically problematic regardless of study but can be defended in cases where information cannot be attained in other more forbearing ways. In my own study, it would have been hard to attain information in other ways but to be present, which will be elaborated in the following. Yet, there were no overarching reasons to perform a covert observation. Still, and as I have touched upon in previous chapters, entering the field with a double set of roles as I did, made it hard to inform about the research in a way that might have been prioritized differently if I was there to do research alone. My role as a volunteer demanded me to focus on my work tasks and operate according to the guidelines and precepts of my host organization. The initial plan was to hang a poster inside the camp to inform that I was doing observation, as discussed with NSD. However, this was not properly resumed by my host organization after my arrival. Practical measures such as having no steadfast base (working days were spent moving around) and the fact that most of the time was spent in a hectic environment with different people coming and going, made this harder to implement than planned. Besides, there had been an emphasis on not involving my research in the volunteer work, something that I felt needed to be respected. Thus, most of my observation was done covert in the sense that my main role in the camp was as a volunteer and I did not have a

chance to inform all inhabitants of the camps that my observations would be used for further analysis. This was not a choice done for the aim of my research or for my own benefits. I will explain why in the following.

To me, there were few better alternatives to study my field than to be present myself and observe. This was largely to avoid doing my research in the "armchair anthropology" way, meaning to study a lived phenomenon based on other's observations without participating in the field myself[153]. I felt it would be inadequate to discuss the conditions of a refugee camp, even more so it's inhabitants and their practices, without in fact having experienced life in a refugee camp. As my field of study relates to practices that take place in borderlands specifically, the refugee camp itself constitutes a large part of the study and the practices and expressions I sought to discover are not observable elsewhere. Also, I planned to use Lefebvre's triadic model of spatial analysis to analyze the material from my observations. It was therefore of importance to be present as my own experiences and encounters constitute parts of the analysis of lived space.

To enter a refugee camp, especially for research purposes, a host organization that operates inside the camp is needed. When I applied to find such an organization, I was asked specifically to be a volunteer and then base my research on my experience as a volunteer in that priority. In other words, the organization that hosted me did not wish to involve research projects directly in their work but would still let me volunteer and subsequently use this experience for further analysis. They reasoned this both with questions of research ethics and professionality in the work, but factors of practicality were also prevalent.

I interpreted this as if the safety and well-being of the refugees was the main priority of the organization. Research in the camps could risk that inhabitants felt invaded or forced to participate. They were probably also aware that the practical framework of the work, such as the hectic environment inside the camps, risked getting in the way of important requirements of research ethics. Additionally, the organization prioritized its fundamental task which was to distribute meals to the refugees. They therefore did not assist research or other things that could interfere with this. Thus, they asked specifically that the research itself, such as taking notes and analyzing them, would take place outside of work and thus also outside the camps.

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[153] Sera, Shriar, Efram, "What is armchair anthropology? Observational practices in 19-th century Britain human sciences", *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 29, no 2, 2014, pp. 26-40, p.29

Due to this, I ended up focusing on my role as a volunteer in the field and noting my experiences and observations in a diary at the end of every workday, outside of the camps. In other words, my focus during the workdays was first and foremost doing my job as a volunteer. Although I was observing throughout the whole day, I did not emphasize my role as a researcher in the field to a degree where it became crucial for me to inform or ask for consent. This was in compliance with my host organization. For these reasons, the observations are replicated fully anonymously.

8.2 Positioning

Although there were reasons for organizing my roles in the way I did, being a volunteer and a researcher simultaneously still reinforced ethical questions of positionality. It could at times feel as this ambiguous role created a double asymmetry in power towards the people I observed. As previously mentioned, not only was I entering the camp as a European citizen and personally unafflicted by their situation as such. I also had the authority as a volunteer to enter and leave the camp as I wished, and lastly, I had power to distribute the food that they needed. In addition to that, I was also doing research, "using" the situation for the benefit of my study without having the opportunity to inform properly to the subjects of the study about it.

It is possible that this asymmetry may have influenced my findings. It may be that my meetings with the camps' inhabitants were shaped by hope of receiving help or improving situations as I inhabited a powerful role in my situation. This would neither have been unlikely nor hard to understand. However, one of the impressions I had in the encounter with the camp's inhabitants was what seemed to me like a certain resilience and independence among them. I did not experience what could be interpreted as explicit signs of desperation in interaction with us. My experience was characterized by what I interpreted as agency and diverse identities among the many individuals that I met. This can, of course, be interpreted in various ways. One could for one argue that desperation can be expressed in many ways, or that with the short amount of time I stayed, I was not in a position to interpret patterns of behavior as I was not sufficiently familiar with the group. Yet, I did not experience active attempts to establish contact as might have been the case if someone was trying to appeal to me to receive more food or make a good impression. Although always accommodating and helpful, it seemed to me that most of the camp's inhabitants focused on living their lives within the framework of their situation. Of course, these accounts are based on my own

personal interpretations and observations and might not reflect the experience of others that were involved in this encounter.

It may be that these experiences relate to the concept of agency, as discussed by Settler[154]. Although in an obvious marginal situation, the camp consisted first and foremost of individuals that were trying to make the best out of their situation with the means they had. In other words, they were more than only victims in that situation. They were first and foremost individuals, reflecting differences in personality in diverse behavior and appearance. Thinking about others in a victimizing or degrading manner bares ethical implications because it results in treating others in degrading manners. I therefore think it is important to interpret individual's behavior in ways outside the framework of victimizing, because it affects how we think about them and inevitably treat them. If we are to hear the voice of subalterns, relating everything to a status of victims may risk not taking them seriously. Hence, I find it important to emphasize how I did not experience the inhabitants of the camp aiming for help from every aid worker in our organization. The camp's inhabitants are aware of the differences between volunteer organizations such as the one I worked with and the workers of IOM who run and manage the camp. They are aware of the volunteer character of our work, something that became visible in the amount of times they would thank us for the job we did and their visible will to help us organize distribution of the food. Agency will be further discussed in later sections in the analysis.

8.3 Anonymity
Spending time with the inhabitants of the camp daily, I would often have informal conversations with them about different subjects. In conversations with the refugees regarding topics outside of those relating to work or more general matters, I would be open about my project and interests. However, no information of personal or individual character was collected without properly informing about my project and intentions. All informal conversations with the refugees regarding the field of research would be properly informed of and when something of relevance appeared, I would ask if referring to their statements would be okay. No names, names of places or personal information such as nationality of groups or specific religious belongings of individuals appear in this material. This is also due to the thesis' focus on a phenomenon rather than on the group per se. As my aim has been to

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[154] Settler, Federico, 2018

discover expressions that appear in spatial circumstances and can be further interpreted, my observation was not exclusively focusing on people but also spatial arrangements and situational circumstances. Thus, no people are being extradited.

8.4 Professionality versus closeness

One of the things that I discovered in my encounter with the refugees was the ethical challenges involved in wanting to be available and caring versus precepts about professionality and the limitation of contact so that it would not impact the refugees negatively. The sector of humanitarian aid has previously debated whether volunteer workers without professional experience might do more harm than good in their work, reasoned with the ethical pitfall of retraumatizing refugees in entering refugee camps, establishing relations and then disappearing to never come back[155]. This can reinforce a feeling of impotence and hopelessness among those who are stuck in these camps.

However, my impression through the different organizations I investigated through the course of my research is that most operate with firm rules and guidelines on how to approach vulnerable people in terms of body contact, non-work related contact, favors and so forth. Yet, meeting these people every day and observing the situation they live in made this a more complicated matter in the field. This related much to me as a person finding it challenging to reject or limit my devotion to people in vulnerable positions, especially so because I originally wanted to be available and help as much as I could. This dilemma was expressed in various situations. There was for instance a difference between kids, who craved attention and aimed at any adult who could give them this, and the adults. Seeing kids that seemed desperate for attention, knowing they were offered only a few hours of school every day, led to many emotionally challenging moments. Still, I found it easier to manage this as the kids would be happy and seemingly satisfied if you spent some time to play with them. What I found more challenging were the adults and adolescents who I experienced expressed different, more extensive needs. Rejecting them for reasons of professionality created an ethical dilemma between my role as a volunteer which demanded that exact professionality, and personal feelings of compassion and desire to help and even more so learn. I will now attempt to illustrate this situation through two specific examples that became great ethical challenges to me during my stay.

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[155] https://time.com/5778412/volunteer-tourism-greece-refugee-humanitarian/?fbclid=IwAR0CuZzaGW2I5wH-8Rmx5Q1d7WbkUSeSp8g4Yc5PlTyzx6b_f8GP6Hj_Z-I, published 25/2/2020, accessed 5/3/2020 at 13:49

In one of the camps, there lived a person with good language skills. I will call this individual NN. NN helped us with a multitude of tasks due to these language skills. This resulted in a good relation between NN and my host organization, involving also some contact outside of work hours. After explaining my reason to be there (my field of research), NN was eager to talk to me because of my interest in religion. After informing NN about my project, NN offered perspectives about religion and spirituality among other things. We had a good and informative chat. We also exchanged contact info, something I did not consider closely because NN already had some contact with the other volunteers in the organization.

A few days after our conversation, NN initiated contact unrelated to work or the conversation we had. My impression was that NN was lonely and wanted someone to talk to. This created an ethical dilemma because I was not sure to which extent unofficial contact outside work hours was accepted neither as a volunteer nor a researcher. Although the contact between NN was a result of my role as a volunteer, my main responsibility was as a researcher as research was the main reason for my stay, and I planned to use my experiences for further analysis. Thus, I had a responsibility related to attainment and handling of information that differed from that of the ones that were only volunteers. To make sure to correspond to research ethics, I found that the right thing to do was to limit contact outside work hours. This was largely also because I did not want to send wrong signals or create any misunderstandings. I knew that my contact with NN was built on my research and volunteer work and not on a personal relation, although the latter can develop through the former. The same was not necessarily the case for NN. It could also be that NN expected something in return, such as me being able to provide help or improve NN's situation, something I was not in a position to do. Simultaneously, I felt like rejecting NN was unfair as we maintained contact during work hours. Also, NN had spent time talking to me and offered perspectives that were of informative value to me. In a way, it therefore felt like I had taken advantage of NN if I did not reply. It might be that NN appreciated the contact in an authentic, non-work related way as it was not restrained by rules and precepts. This could risk giving NN the feeling of having been taken advantage of. Moreover, I felt a responsibility to a person living a difficult life and might need a someone to talk to.

This became a difficult choice related to the balancing of personal values, interpersonal responsibilities, research precepts and professionality, all related to my three sometimes

conflicting roles in the field. How was I supposed to balance these when all of them felt equally important to consider in that moment?

Another similar situation concerned a child living in one of the camps. Like children elsewhere, some children in the camp initiated more contact than others. Especially one child would approach me quite often, more specifically each time I entered the camp by running towards our car, wanting to play with me, hug me and eventually giving me a friendship-ring. Assuming that this child might need attention and care in that situation and that I might be one to provide it, it felt nearly impossible to limit that contact in order to follow professional precepts to avoid the child from becoming too attached. Towards the end of my stay, I was asked by my leader to refrain from initiating contact with the child as I was leaving shortly and she feared a potential emotional reaction from the child. Needless to say, this felt like an extremely difficult thing to do at the time.

This also relates to the above mentioned discourse about professionality among aid workers working with vulnerable groups. However, in this discourse, the refugees themselves claim that they feel seen and acknowledged and appreciate the attention they receive from volunteers, something they generally miss from others in their situation. Volunteers are in a position to provide these things namely because their work is based on volunteerism and personal, humane values, and is in that way released from the more political aspects of the situation. Although it would be impossible for people not living in refugee camps to imagine the emotional hardship of this scenario, it is simultaneously a paradox that in the context of not discussing and even more so treating refugees only as victims, behavior that treat them equally generalizing is encouraged. There are obvious pitfalls and considerations needed to be done in establishing contact with vulnerable people, some of whom are discussed above. However, I relate this to questions of agency and question whether treating vulnerable people according to professional guidelines is the right way to acknowledge people in such a situation. In retrospect, outside of the field and without the responsibility of neither an organization nor an academic institution, I realize that in a broader perspective my responsibility to any person as a human being surpasses precepts and guidelines of professionality. Although guidelines and precepts regarding these things need to be respected and upheld in the field, the situation looks different from outside the field. When discussing agency, I would claim that it is not possible to acknowledge someone's agency and individual

personality without daring to approach them from a personal standpoint and communicate as individuals.

8.5 Summing up chapter 8

I have in this chapter reflected on and discussed some of the ethical implications of my research. I will in the following present central observations and evens from my participant observation.

9.0 Central Observations

I will in this chapter present central observations and events from my participant observation that will be particularly relevant for further discussion. I will present and describe them in this chapter without further analysis, followed by an analysis and discussion of these in chapter 10.

9.1 Religious spaces

In one of the camps, mostly consisting of small barracks and tents, there were two big and white marquees near the entrance of the camp. Both were mosques, or rather, one had been but was now filled up to the brim with smaller tents, matrasses and big amounts of personal belongings and assets inside, inhabited by people so that they could sleep with roof over their heads, shaded from the sun and sheltered from the rain. This big tent, slightly decorated with religious scribblings in black marker pen, was now overcrowded with people rushing in and out, some with bags, some with strollers, listening to music, talking on phones, some sleeping and others simply hanging out. Much like the Methodist church in Johannesburg as presented in chapter 7, this mosque had now become the home of several refugees that had arrived early enough to catch a space under the tarpaulin roof.

The other marquee was in fact a mosque, at least at the time of my stay. It is not unlikely that due to the early 2020 influx of refugees it might serve other functions now. It was a big white marquee tent, covered on the inside with improvised carpets of different colors and patterns. It was filled with light due to the combination of white tarpaulin and sunlight, however always empty at the time of my visits. Compared to the former mosque and the whole rest of the camp, it was silent inside. I would guess it was the only place that silent in the entire camp. Entering was like stopping time for a moment, as the continuous sound of kids playing suddenly sounded dimmed and far away. The only thing I could hear loud and clear was a clock on the wall and the marking of every second. It seems unlikely that this tent could fit even a small share of the camp's inhabitants. It was not visited by anyone during the time of my stay, except from one man on my very last day. Sometimes there was a rock in front of the door.

I wondered if this mosque was used at all. I was told it was only open during hours of prayer, but not for other activities. In conversation with one of the employees of the camp, it appeared that he thought the mosque was rather unnecessary. He wished it could be used to provide

"other services", without elaborating further. I never had the chance to ask any of the inhabitants of the camp what they thought about that matter.

In the other camp, there were no visible similar facilities. Although having a vast share of space that could have been used for religious activities, this seemed to be used for other purposes. There was a kid's room used for kid's activities once a week and a big entrance hall, an open space consisting of a café, chairs and tables, a few small kiosks, decorated with pictures and flags. This is where people gathered to hang out, like the heart of the camp. Also, the space where we cooked was empty at all other times. It could have been that there was not enough space for religious spaces, or that they had not been assisted properly to create one, but it did not seem as this was the case. However, as several hours were spent with the inhabitants of the camp, I had the chance of asking. An inhabitant that helped cooking told me there had used to be a room for religious activities before, but as in the other camp, this had gradually become someone's home. During this conversation, it appeared that few used such religious facilities and the inhabitant doubted that a space for religious use would be frequently used. To prove a point, he said; *although you can pray everywhere, not many do it anyway*.

An employee of that camp confirmed that no one had ever taken the initiative to create such a space. His opinion was that the camp's space should be used for other things, and his impression was that religion was nothing big in this camp. According to him, the inhabitants used their time for other things, even partying and sometimes drinking. Working with a minority persecuted in a sectarian conflict back home, his impression was that many of the inhabitants enjoyed freedom from having to practice religion.

9.2 Religious expression and practice

Still, this does not necessarily mean that there was no religion, religious practice or expressions inside the camp. While drinking coffee and chatting in the main hall, waiting for groceries we would buy from the camp's improvised kiosks, I spotted a Quran in one of the kiosks on display between goods of different sorts. It stood out from beauty products, post cards, candies and the personal decorations of the owner. As I pointed it out to the owner, intrigued as it was the first explicit religious symbol within that camp, he was quick to inform me that he does not use religion to judge or separate people, not like where he came from. He tells me that religion is unity between people and that he could not care less about religious

belonging because there is no difference between people. It might be that this emphasis on unity derives from the ongoing conflicts in his country of origin. He explains that what matters is how we treat each other and thus that he does not practice his religion very explicitly as he believes what happens in his life is between him and God. God knows him and is not concerned with strict practices.

Explicit religious practice was not prominent inside the camps, at least not during my presence. Shortly summarized, the mosque was mostly empty and elsewhere there were no strictly religious spaces. Still, it was visible that some of the inhabitants were religious for instance through the wearing of religious garment, or the displayed book mentioned above. One of the inhabitants that helped us cook was among them. In a conversation, she tells me that the nature and character of the camp refrained her from practicing religion as she normally would. She explains that she does not pray inside the camp like she used to because it is important to pray in a silent and clean place which is nowhere to be found there. She claims that the camp is not a place suitable for religious purposes. Similar to the statements of the man in the kiosk, she independently stated that the most important thing regardless of where you are is to be a good person towards other people.

9.3 Humanity

However critical and marginal the situation, a strong impression I attained through my stay was what I perceived as humanity and compassion among the camps' inhabitants. Before I elaborate on this, it must be said that news from the Greek refugee camps at times can be characterized by vandalism and violence, often reasoned with extreme levels of frustration due to lack of space, trauma, unpredictability, rivalry for resources and prospects, to mention some. These things are outside the scope and aim of this thesis. Still, without making justifications, I would claim that the situation and circumstances in the camps offer some explanation. Together with vandalism and violence comes also suicide attempts, severe depression and deep psychological issues as a result of the situation. I cannot know the intentions of all, but through my shared experiences during my fieldwork it did not appear that these social problems derive from inhumanity or lack of compassion.

My overarching experience in the camps was an eagerness to help and a mental and emotional presence and availability that I have previously not experienced in the same way. In one of the camps, the refugees would wait for us in the burning sun on an open field with little shadow.

Sometimes we would be up to hours late due to delays. Not once did I hear a direct complaint. Most of the time, the men would jump up and start helping us set up our food station, and without exception they would smile and greet us. Women would mostly wait patiently and smiling in the queue, with a few exceptions such as Fridays when levels of desperation increased visibly as we did not provide food in the weekends. One woman would sometimes ask me how I was. I would find it hard to answer at times because the natural thing to reply would be "what about you?", but I was insecure whether that was the right thing to say in that situation. I still did, and sometimes she would reply good and other times not so good. Seldomly they would comment on the amount of food. They consequently said thank you, and sometimes gave their blessings. Only once in a while did someone try to cheat; exaggerate the number of family members to get more food, but they were quickly revealed by the others that told us the truth and made sure there would be enough food for the rest. In times of language barriers, the ones that knew English would contribute and they would look after each other so that everyone would get their share.

One woman spoke English quite well and had previously helped our organization through language barriers. As our organization knew underwear and lady articles were scarce, partly because she had told us directly, we brought her a bag of donated underwear for women to say thank you. Shortly after she received it with great gratitude, she walked around from tent to tent distributing the articles to the other women.

The following story might only be a "kids thing". Yet, analyzing it using theories such as post-colonial and spatial theory, it can still be interpreted as an important part of the social dimension of the camp. In both camps, the kids had found a stray kitten. They nurtured and looked after these kittens with great enthusiasm and responsibility, sharing it between them on a day to day basis. In one camp, the kids sat in a big group and focused immensely on it. I asked them what the kitten's name was, and one of the kids replied protective, looking at me skeptically to ensure a certain distance between me and the kitten. The kitten lied in the arms of one of the boys, relaxing and clearly enjoying while the boy was petting it carefully on its back. I was hardly allowed to touch it. The boy asked me if we had some food for the cat. I promised I would bring some one of the other days and I did. I met the cat with different caretakers throughout my stay.

We would meet many of the same people every day. One of the men that we often met

returned one day with his son and soup for all of us workers at the end of the day. He had made soup out of red beet, and he brought with him a big portion of it and handed it out to us. Although it was usually him that came to us to collect food for his family, this time he wanted to give something in return. Similarly, the men running the kiosks were always eager to share with us from what they had. If we bought fruit, they would give us extra although there was not much fruit there to begin with. They would give us sweets from their inventory and make us coffee and deny us to pay.

9.4 Summing up chapter 9

I have in this chapter presented central observations and events from my participant observation that will be particularly relevant in the further discussion of the following chapter. They relate to religious spaces inside the camps or the lack thereof, personal expressions of religiosity among the camps' inhabitants, and prevalent humanity between the refugees and us. These observations will in the following chapter be discussed in light of central post-colonial theories and theory of spatial production.

10.0 Discussion

I will in this chapter discuss central observations and events from my participant observation as presented and described in the previous chapter. I will discuss these in light of post-colonial theory, specifically concepts like agency, resistance and subaltern. This will illustrate how practices and expressions that I observed can be interpreted as borderland religion. I will also analyze the refugee camps using Rønsdal and Wyller's interpretation of Lefebvre's triadic model of spatial analysis, to explore how the camps can be understood as spaces that influence religious practices and expressions that appear there through spatial production.

10.1 Challenging traditional sacredness

As described in the previous chapter, spaces that had previously been used for religious activities had in both camps gradually become homes for refugees, such as the marquee mosque in one of the camps. This can be interpreted as lack of space for traditional religious practice inside the camps, yet both in a physical, material sense but also in the more social, symbolic sense related to the lived space of the camps. I will elaborate on this in the following.

Similar to the Johannesburg Methodist Church as described by Settler in chapter 7, the need for space for refugees to live seems to have gradually surpassed the need for a sacred space in both camps. This leads to questions regarding the purpose and use of a sacred space in displacement. The image of the former mosque in one of the camps is describing. The big white marquee, decorated with religious scribblings in Arabic, looks from the outside just like the other marquee which was still a mosque at the time of my stay. While the latter marquee was clean and silent yet completely empty, the former was full of people, of social interaction and sound; snoring, rummaging and music, meaning that sacred space served a different purpose now. At one point, there had been a shift in the content, purpose and representation of that sacred room. However, although the room was not specified as a room for sacred activities anymore, it might be that it still represents something sacred. This depends on what fills it and what is perceived sacred in the specific context.

As Wyller has suggested based on Lefebvre's theory of spatial production, it is not only a space's planned and imagined purpose that creates a space, as becomes quite obvious in the case of the refugee camp inside an industrial warehouse. Rather, it is the activities, encounters

and people that fill it[156]. Now, the former mosque of the refugee camp was filled with human lives, relations and emotions and was occupied for everyday living. In other words, compared to the operative mosque, it was filled with a form of humanity; objects, assets and symbols related to the living of human life. The way this room had been replaced as home to the many newly arrived refugees can be considered an act of humanity, upholding lives of fellow human beings. The Quran in one of the kiosks was a similar imagery. The one visible sign of explicit religiosity I found in that camp was a Quran, however squeezed seemingly discretely between basic necessities and goods for sale, like fruit, candies, coffee, tea, diapers and beauty products. In other words, juxtaposed to things related to the living of everyday life inside the camp.

Putting these two imageries together; the now inhabited mosque and the Quran in the kiosk, it might look as if humanity, meaning both symbols, objects and conditions related to being human but also kindness and compassion as emphasized by some, occupied the religious spaces of the camps. In doing so, it also seems as religious practices were slightly replaced with acts and expressions of humanity, practices that may be reflecting the lived and shared experience of living in the camps.

Can this be interpreted as a shift in sacredness taking place inside the camps? Can it be that the spatial context of the refugee camp leads to a shift in what is perceived sacred, from that of a traditional sacredness like religious objects, symbols and spaces reserved for rituals, to a borderland sacredness where human lives and fundamental human needs surpass and replace religious spaces and practices with spaces and practices of humanity? Definitions of sacredness relate to that which is connected to God and religion. Yet they also refer to things that are in deserving of particular respect and set aside from the ordinary[157], implying a change of behavior in relation to things that have special significance[158]. Usually what is considered sacred is objects, places or rituals that have gone through a process of sanctification. However, the mental process of sanctification relates to acknowledgment of

[156] Wyller, Trygve, 2016, pp. 59

[157] Van der Breemer, Rosemarie, José Casanova & Trygve Wyller (eds.), *Secular and Sacred? The Scandinavian Case of Religion in Human Rights, Law and Public Space*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rubrecht, 2014, pp. 12–15

[158] Hubert, Jane, "Sacred beliefs and beliefs of sacredness",in Carmichael, David L., Hubert, Jane, Reeves Brian & Schance, Audhild (eds.), *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places*, Routledge London & New York, 1994, pp. 9-18, p. 11

certain aspects of life having divine character and special significance[159]. Interpreting this in the context of forced displacement, may it be that preservation of human lives and accommodation of fundamental needs become the matters of special significance? As humanity and compassion appearing through statements and visualized through acts, receive this significant status, it seems to challenge traditional perceptions of sacredness in the specific context of refugee camps. It is therefore reasonable to ask if humanity becomes a form of borderland expression of sacredness. While compassion for fellowmen and protection of human lives seemed to be upheld as a collective priority inside the camps, reserving of religious spaces and practices were less prevalent. What appears as sacred seems rather to be a sanctification of humanity that exceeds traditional trajectories of sacredness.

Yet, how does this relate to the space of the refugee camp itself? Portrayed through the now inhabited mosque, there might not be enough space for traditional and collective religious practice in a space that is also filled up with vulnerable people. However, not only due to lack of physical space but more importantly related to processes taking place in the lived dimension of that space. I will now explore how processes such as those discussed above can be interpreted in light of spatial analysis.

10.2 Understanding borderland sacredness through theory of spatial production

As elaborated in chapter six about spatial theory, production of space can be analyzed from three different but interdependent levels according to Rønsdal and Wyller, building on Lefebvre. Together, these are constitutive to how we think about a space, how we make use of it and eventually the social lives lived there[160]. If we are to understand processes of borderland religion inside the camp using the three-leveled analytical model, a closer examination of different aspects of the refugee camp is necessary and will be conducted in the following.

An inhabitant of one of the camps claimed there were no spaces for religious practice inside the refugee camp. This statement could mean that there was not enough space or that available spaces were inappropriate and unsuited for religious activities. However, another

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[159] Pargament, Kenneth I. & Mahoney, Annette, *THEORY:* "Sacred Matters: Sanctification as a Vital Topic for the Psychology of Religion*", The International Journey for the Psychology of Religion*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2009, pp. 179-198, p. 183

[160] Rønsdal, Kaia, 2017, p. 61

possible interpretation of this statement is that it was not only in reference to the camp's organization of space per se. The inhabitant emphasized that there was no space quiet nor clean enough in the camp to be holy. Firstly, it is reasonable to assume that the building of the refugee camp was never designed in consideration for practicing religion, as it originally had been an industrial warehouse. It was big, built for storing goods, implying an open layout, leaving very little privacy as it became a living space. Although there was vast space, it seemed hard for people to live privately and peacefully. Built with thick brick walls many meters high, it seemed hard to keep clean, and the acoustic inside was in such a way that you could hear just about everything that took place with a slight echo. Understanding this space as a perceived space, it does not appear as a place that invites for religious practice and spirituality, neither did it seem as traditional religious practice was easy to implement. Focusing on the second level, it is reasonable to assume that it was never designed or planned for such purposes either. Not conceived as such and thus, not practiced as such. The fact that these people live in a warehouse is probably unrelated to any spiritual and religious considerations at all. Yet although these factors relate to the physical and material dimensions of the camp, they can impact the religious life there. They may reform religious expressions because they contribute to shape the practices that take place inside the camps. In other words; representations of space and spatial representations are interconnected and affect each other.

Analyzing from the third level of the triadic model, namely the lived space of the refugee camp, the inhabitant may also be referring to what the camp contains and represents in immaterial terms. These are aspects that appear when understanding them from the level of the lived. Without production of space on this level, the camp would have been an empty building without a deeper meaning to us. Yet, namely the inhabitants of the camp, their lives and everything their lives contain and entail, like their reasons for being there and their experience of it, are the main producer of that space. Bodies and bodily presence are fundamental aspects of this level of space. Thus, the level of lived space can only be analyzed and understood by sharing, experiencing and living it through one's own body and senses [161]. Or, as Rønsdal writes; to know anything about a lived space you must be part of it yourself[162]. This means that important yet hidden aspects of life inside the refugee camp take place in the lived space and cannot be understood without sharing that space. Hence, to comprehend the

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[161] Rønsdal, Kaia, 2017, Wyller, Trygve, 2016
[162] Ibid., p. 65

inhabitant's experience of the refugee camp as unsuited for traditional religious practice, we might have to understand the camp from the level of lived space. Although her religious experience inside the camp is described in terms of the perceived and conceived levels of the camp, it might as much relate to dynamics and processes taking place in the lived level of space. These are for instance the moods, social relations, perceptions and experiences that are shared by its inhabitants and that eventually lead to the practices taking place or not taking place there. In the sharing of this lived space however, circumstances and surroundings become less present because something else is shared. This means that when the inhabitant claims there is no sacred space inside the camp, no space suited for traditional religious practice, it might be that it is the case mainly in terms of the social, emotional and shared experience of the camp, implying that these factors shape perceptions and experiences and furthermore practices and expressions of religion there. However, analyzing within this particular framework, this simultaneously means that despite the lack of religious facilities, I can still interpret that there might be spaces of sacredness in the camp namely in terms of these socialities that fill it, only they must be understood from the lived level of that space. This is where humanity appears and becomes prevalent, meaning the shift in borderland sacredness must be understood from the level of lived and through the sharing of these lived spaces.

10.3 Humanity as resistance

It is in the lived space that also resistance appears, as mentioned by Rønsdal and discussed specifically in the context of refugee camps by Settler. Lived space includes the dimensions of space that generate social norms, values and expressions[163]. Hence, Rønsdal writes that it is from the analytical level of lived space that environments opening for creative responses such as resistance may be discovered and discussed[164]. Resistance can in this context be interpreted as challenging of conventions and the invention of alternative and creative ways of living. In this context, specifically in forced situations, such as forced displacement, where possibilities to act and express agency are restrained. Settler mentions the building of the Jungle church in Calais as a form of resistance towards harsh and marginalizing environments, unacknowledging to the agency of the refugees living there[165]. An example of resistance from my observations was the kids' care for the little kitten. As in the Calais Jungle camp, the

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[163] Ibid., p. 61
[164] Ibid., p. 61
[165] Settler, Federico, 2018, p. 103

environments in these camps are harsh and marginal. One way of resisting these surroundings is to find ways to live a life that break with them. One alternative way is to nurture and take care of a fragile kitten, a practice that contrasts and resists the surrounding environment and offers as means to express something that differ from the situation that is forced on them[166]. Another example from my observations is the man that made soup for our organization. While the role of being a victim and having to stand in line for food daily had been forced on him, he resisted this role by becoming someone that had something to give back in sharing the little he had.

Building on Agamben's state of exception, this is what Settler refers to when he argues that it is namely the exceptionally marginal conditions of refugee camps that may be the reason religious practices take different forms there. The coming together of people in pressing situations with scarce resources challenge conventional ways of living and generate new thinking. According to Settler, it is namely these environments that therefore contribute to reform traditional religious practices and expressions[167]. If we are to follow Settler's thinking, humanity, understood as a practice that derives from the experience of living in the refugee camp, may itself be understood as a reform of religious practice. Humanity becomes a result of having to rethink religious practices inside the refugee camp based on the conditions and events that take place there, and furthermore the lived experience of these. While related to the camp's physical and material conditions, resistance is felt and expressed on the level of the lived, as a result of living in the camp and sharing the life world and conditions there. Thus, the humanity I observed can be interpreted as a form of resistance resulting from the shared experience of living life inside that camp.

10.4 Humanity as counter-site

Humanity may also constitute the counter-site of the camp. If we look at the example of the previously described Rosengrenska project as analyzed by Wyller, he emphasizes the project's quality of contesting the world around it. In his perspective, counter-sites, being alternative spaces contesting unaccepting and marginalizing societies, are a form of spatial resistance[168]. In spatial analysis, the level of lived lets us understand a space as counter-site in allowing us to explore the space's function and meaning for its inhabitants or users. Religious

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[166] Settler, Federico, 2018, p. 103
[167] Ibid., p. 103
[168] Wyller, Trygve, 2016, p. 59

spaces inside a refugee camp may be understood as counter-sites, as in the case of Settler's jungle church interpreted from a post-colonial perspective[169]. However, there were no similar religious spaces seemingly offering the qualities of counter-sites in the refugee camps I visited. Or, the religious spaces that were there were seemingly not an integrated part of the lived space of the camps, meaning it did not have the presumed functions or meanings for the people that lived there. A counter-site appears not through its sheer existence or imagined purpose, but through what fills it in terms of social life, namely how it is lived. Thus, a counter-site needs to be a space that through its social content bears the quality of accepting otherness and differences of the marginalized that are there[170]. When the inhabitant of the camp stated religious practice felt inappropriate inside the camp, it may seem as if traditional religious practice served the opposite effect of a counter-site in that specific context, namely reminding the inhabitant of her surroundings instead of contesting them. However, a practice that in my understanding seemed to develop in these spaces was namely the frequently mentioned humanity. If that humanity can be interpreted as a form of resistance as reasoned in the paragraph above, it might be that humanity constitutes the counter-site of the camp. Judging from the lived dimension of space, the humanity inside the camp may be the site that counters the surrounding environment and acknowledges the otherwise neglected agency of the others.

10.5 Humanity as agency

Settler also uses reformation of religious practice and alternative expressions as ways of illustrating migrant agency[171]. Using the examples of Calais Jungle Church and Johannesburg Methodist church, he writes that a post-colonial reading of these two cases suggest that through religious practices and expressions, refugees and migrants can in fact live productively and with agency in otherwise brutal, hostile and regulated spaces[172]. Furthermore, he writes that "The case of the Jungle Church is a good example of how migrants assert their agency through producing structures and symbols of meaning that capture their shared interest…as well as signaling to refuse to accept and submit to life-denying conditions of this non place"[173]. In observations such as the kids' caring for the kitten, the woman sharing her newly received underwear with the other women, the way the

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[169] Settler, Federico, 2018
[170] Ibid., p. 63
[171] Settler, Federico, 2018, pp. 109-111
[172] Ibid. pp. 109
[173] Ibid. pp. 109

refugees helped us and each other with the distribution of food, or the fact that spaces reserved for religious activities became inhabited by people who needed a place to sleep, indicate something similar. Although these practices may not necessarily be explicit religious practices, they may still be interpreted as practices that capture the shared interest of the camps' inhabitants, and in that way become sets of meaningful structures and symbols that allows for individual expressions of personal values and choices. In this way, humanity might also be a way of expressing agency in the spatial context of the refugee camp.

10.6 Hearing the subaltern of our time

According to Spivak in her infamous article *Can the Subaltern Speak?*[174], there are few proofs that the subaltern of our times in fact are able to speak to us[175]. This relates mainly to the fact that we do not care because they are subalterns, presumably without the political power and relevance to matter sufficiently. In other words, it is not the subalterns that cannot speak but rather that we cannot hear them. As I have previously touched upon in the chapter about of postcolonial theory, displaced people in refugee camps can be considered some of the subalterns of our time. Judging from their situation it can seem as if Spivak might be right[176]. Resuming what I wrote introductory in this thesis, the situation of the refugees on European territory for one has far from improved. Rather, it has worsened due to regional conflicts and despite political campaigns, demonstrations and hard work of those engaged in the situation of refugees, very little is done to improve the situations of those living in refugee camps throughout Europe. Although something has been spoken to us, it looks as we have not listened.

Yet, using Settler's text as an optic, it may seem that the subaltern develop new and alternative ways of speaking. Sharing lived space is one way to discover this and is a way to in fact listen. As Wyller suggests, despite the situation that may indicate a rather voiceless, unheard group, someone is speaking in the borderlands. However, you need to become a part of the borderland vocabulary to hear what is spoken; experience it through encounters, perceiving and sensing [177]. I will resume Rønsdal's example of a weather forecast. Seeing cold temperatures being predicted on weather forecasts is something fundamentally different

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[174] Spivak, Gayatri, 1988
[175] Wyller, Trygve, 2016, p. 71
[176] Landry, Donna & MacLean, Gerald, 1996, p. 5
[177] Wyller, Trygve, 2018, p. 87

from experiencing it, to be outside and feel the cold on your body[178]. To understand the situation of someone forced to live in that cold, such as a refugee or a homeless person, it is necessary to share that persons lived space, something that enables you to also share their lifeworld[179]. Only then can you hear what is spoken to you, as you share the experience and thus also the vulnerability of the ones you share it with. In this way, you cannot ignore them as yourself is part of it[180]. When I am in the refugee camp I need to listen, I cannot ignore. In sharing that space, we become more than refugees and researcher. We become individuals with agency expressed through encounters of humanity, cooperation, cooking and conversations about love, food and faith. The camp becomes more than a refugee camp. In being in it, it also appears to me as a home, school, kindergarden and playfield for kids, cafès, kiosks and mosques, where lives unrelated to statuses of refugees, numbers and bureaucratic processes are lived. Only when I realize that lives are in fact lived inside the camps can I understand how it must be to live there.

10.7 Summing up chapter 10

I have in this chapter discussed central observations from my participant observations in light of post-colonial and spatial theory. I have through post-colonial theory interpreted observable practices from the camps, such as a prevalent humanity among the camps' inhabitants, as a possible shift in sacredness and as sign of resistance and agency. Through theory of spatial production, I have demonstrated how these practices are expressed their respective ways related to their spatial context. In the following, I will conclude and finish this thesis.

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[178] Rønsdal, Kaia, 2017, p. 65
[179] Ibid. p. 62
[180] Ibid. p. 65

11.0 Conclusion

With the following research question as starting point: *how can religion be interpreted and understood within the spatial and situational context of a refugee camp?*, the aim of this thesis has been to explore practices and expressions in borderlands, specifically refugee camps, that can be interpreted as religious practices. This has been done to shed light on life in displacement as well as to explore religion as a migrating phenomenon in a world with millions of people living displaced. To do so, I have conducted participant observations in two refugee camps to observe practices and expressions of borderland religion. I have in this thesis presented these camps as the context and location of my research, and given an overview of the background and research context for the topic of migration and religion. I have introduced the concept of borderland religion which has been the theoretical starting point of this thesis. I have introduced the applied method being participant observation and reflected on ethical aspects of conducting this method in research with vulnerable groups. I have discussed central observations from the participant observation in light of relevant theories, being post-colonial theory as presented by Federico Settler, Gayatri Spivak and Giorgio Agamben. I have also introduced and applied spatial theory as created by Henri Lefebvre and presented by Kaia Rønsdal and Trygve Wyller. I will now present the conclusive findings from this material.

Through participant observation in two refugee camps in Greece, it became apparent that explicit traditional religious practices were not particularly prominent inside the respective camps. However, borderland religion thesis suggests that religious practices and expressions are influenced by factors of migration and reformed on this basis. Using post-colonial and spatial theory, I have explored how prevalent practices that I observed in these camps, such as humanity among the camps' inhabitants, still can be interpreted as a form of religious practice using the specific framework of borderland religion. This means practices related to religion and spirituality that appear in the intersection between migration and religion and come to be expressed the way they do because of migration.

Exploring definitions of sacredness in the specific context shed light on humanity as a practice with high significance and an almost sacred position in displacement. Using post-colonial theory, this humanity can also be interpreted as a form of resistance towards the harsh conditions of displacement. When surrounded by chaos, humanity can be interpreted as practices and expressions resisting these surroundings by acting and thinking in ways that

break with them. Looking at this resistance from a perspective of spatial analysis, we can assume that the conditions of the refugee camp as a space contributes to the shaping of these practices, especially so on the level of the lived, meaning the encounters and social dynamics that take place inside the camps. Humanity can also be interpreted as a sign of agency, meaning it may function as a means of expressing identity, will and values unrestrained by otherwise restraining structural circumstances. Considering how practices and expressions of humanity occupied larger parts of the camp and were explicitly mentioned by its inhabitants as an important religious practice in the specific context, humanity appears as a borderland religion practice taking place specifically on the border between Europe and the East in the two refugee camps I visited in Greece.

Finishing remarks

As Machado, Turner and Wyller have discussed, borders are one of the most contested global issues of our time[181], and the two categories "religion" and "refugees" have become increasingly prominent categories in the global public discourse[182]. Yet, there is a void of research to inform about the reality of these entangled phenomena, which constitute a reality for increasing amounts of people worldwide. Through this exploration of the life worlds of only a few people living in displacement specifically in Europe, I had the opportunity to attain a glimpse in how the two categories co-exist. This has shed light on how life in displacement can be lived and experienced. These explorations have shown how certain practices can be used as means of resistance and expression in marginal and restraining conditions. Even more so, it has highlighted diversity and nuances in how religion is perceived and practiced among people that are frequently mentioned but seldom heard, especially in the context of religion. As the situation for these refugees is unlikely to change in the near future, research to explore aspects of life in displacement becomes increasingly significant because as the amount of people increase, it can inform us how life is lived and experienced in this world. Not only among those who already have the means to express their experiences, but more importantly those who do not. New and alternative knowledge must be offered, implying the need for research focusing on shared and lived experience. This means that it is not enough to point out that the subaltern cannot speak and problematize it. As have been pointed to in this thesis, it is not that these groups do not speak. It is more that we do not hear. By sharing and experiencing life worlds, we can however become familiar with each other and become able

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[181] Machado, Daisy, Turner, Bryan S. & Wyller, Trygve, 2018, p. 1
[182] Mavelli, Luca and Wilson, Erin K., 2017, p. 1

to speak and listen in new ways. As Rønsdal has pointed out; sharing lived spaces leads to sharing vulnerability, something that becomes crucial in an understanding of this situation. With millions of people living in displacement worldwide, making displacement an increasingly normalized part of our global society, the importance of our involvement increases. Such a big number of people makes broad research from several perspectives important particularly to avoid these millions of people being discussed as one mass. Although this contribution might be small in terms of geography and narrow in topic, it suggests that explorations of the small spaces should not be overlooked in portraying how life in displacement is much more than just that.

12.0 Litterature

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