UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Security or Solidarity? The Securitisation of EU Migration and the Management of Europe's 'Undesirables' in Lesvos

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Abstract

The EU migration system is built on the principle of solidarity but guided by security fears. This has enormous consequences for those seeking asylum in Europe, especially in the hotspot zones on the Aegean islands. Security discourse within Europe and Greece as well as security actions such as changes to Greek asylum law, detention, pushbacks, and civil unrest in Lesvos has increased the precarity of survival for the refugees and asylum-seekers currently trapped there. Moria refugee camp is a 'state of exception' where people who reside in the camp have been reduced to 'bare life' objects by supranational and Greek authorities. Grassroots solidarity initiatives, however, offer an alternative to the management of migration in Europe. They challenge security discourse, hold authorities accountable to human rights violations, and seek to respect and encourage human dignity and sustainable solutions to the perceived 'refugee crisis' in Europe.

#EnoughIsEnough

List of Abbreviations

EU	European Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UNHCR	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
FRONTEX	EU Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
MOTG	Movement On The Ground

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1. Introduction

Aylan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian refugee child, washed up on a Turkish shore on the 2nd September 2015. The shocking image which captured his body on the beach went viral and markedly began the 'refugee crisis' in Europe (Iliadou, 2019: 65; Ticktin, 2016: 258). There was an outpour of outrage, sympathy, and solidarity around the world (Al Jazeera, 2015; The Guardian, 2015; The New York Times, 2015).

The increase of migrants trying to reach Europe, which according to the UNHCR (2017) were predominantly refugees[1], in 2015 was largely due to the worsening crises in the Middle East, especially the Syrian and Libyan Civil Wars. The International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) *Displacement Tracking Matrix – Flow Monitoring System* counted over one million irregular migrants, refugees, and asylum-seeker[2] arrivals into Europe in 2015, mostly from Syria, Africa, and South Asia (IOM, 2015). Out of this number 821,008 refugees and migrants[3] entered Greece, mostly by sea (IOM, 2015).

The Aegean islands became 'hotspots' from 2015 due to the high number of irregular arrivals and were overwhelmed by the increased migrant numbers. Fast forward exactly five years from Aylan Kurdi's death and in 2020 the situation in the Aegean has been described as 'hell' (The Guardian, 2020c). Reception centres are now detention centres for Europe's 'undesirables' (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020a) and many human rights watchdogs and media outlets have condemned the living conditions and lack of human dignity.

This dissertation analyses the structural flaws of the EU migration system, the supranational and grassroots principle of solidarity, and the securitisation of migration in Europe. The focus is on the situation in the Aegean, specifically on the island of Lesvos, and how EU-level policies have contradicted European values and affected refugees and asylum-seekers on the island.

[1] A refugee is defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention as a person who: 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.' (UNHCR, 1951: 14).

[2] An asylum-seeker is someone whose request for refugee status is yet to be processed (UNHCRa).

[3] This dissertation will use the term migrant and border-crossers in addition to refugee and asylum-seeker to highlight mixed migration flows.

Lesvos has been chosen as the focus as it has been described as both the centre of solidarity (Rozakou, 2017: 102) and suffering (The Guardian, 2020b). A content analysis of social media posts from February to August 2020, NGO and grassroots organisations reports, news articles, and secondary literature have been used to critique the EU migration system and the situation in the Aegean.

The research questions are as follows:

> **How does the EU securitisation approach to migration contradict or support EU values of solidarity?**
>
> **How far does encampment as a solution to the 'refugee crisis' feed into the securitisation theory?**
>
> **Does grassroots solidarity offer a more sustainable alternative to supranational-EU ideas on solidarity and migration?**

Ultimately the two principles which guide both EU and grassroots level actors in the context of refugee and asylum-seekers are security and solidarity. The EU preaches solidarity rhetoric, however, it seems that this solidarity remains, if at all, between member states and does not filter down to the individual, to those seeing international protection in Europe. Instead security concerns dominate migration discourse and actions which only reaffirms the demonisation of the migrant and tightens EU and national restrictions on migration. This has led to the creation of refugee hotpots in the Aegean where migrants are held for long periods of time in conditions which have been condemned by human rights groups. Grassroots solidarity initiatives, however, seek to challenge and hold EU and national authorities accountable for their securitisation actions. Arguably they also offer a more sustainable solution to the current refugee regime where a grassroots solidarity takes precedence over security, sovereignty and politics.

The following chapter contains a literature review of the EU migration system, principle of solidarity, and the securitisation of non-EU migration. This is followed by a methodology chapter which outlines the research design. The case study chapter focuses in on Lesvos and how security and solidarity discourses and actions at the EU and grassroots level have played out on the ground, and the consequences this has on the refugees and asylum-seekers held there.

2. Literature Review

Since 2001 the European migration system, national and global policies on refugees and asylum-seekers, and the humanitarian governance of the refugee regime has been increasingly analysed, critiqued, and debated in reference to security and human rights issues. Post-Arab Spring, migration into Europe has been increasingly restricted and has significant implications for the EU's identity, EU migration policies, national politics of member states, and explicit repercussions for the lives and rights of migrants stuck on Europe's external borders.

This literature review firstly analyses the EU migration system and the centrality of the principle of solidarity. Then the securitisation of migration and displacement in the EU will be examined in the context of the Arab Spring. Lastly, the contradictory nature of the EU principle of solidarity will be analysed on a supranational and individual level.

2.1. EU and Migration: History and Solidarity

Europe has historically been a significant destination for migrants. The liberal politics, respect for human rights, and developed free-markets create the image of Europe as a safe-haven for those seeking security (Borowicz, 2017: 91). The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (The Charter) states that the EU is 'founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice' (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012).

From the early 1900s to the 1970s migration flows within Europe were largely dominated by European migrants. During the interwar years Europeans who were displaced by fascist and communist persecution fled to periphery nations. The post-war context saw twenty million displaced (Zimmermann, 1995: 46). The International Refugee Organisation was created in 1946 to repatriate, resettle and protect the displaced in Europe and was later superseded by the UNHCR in 1952. The central debate on the motivations and approach of the post-war resettlement programme, however, focuses on the 'purely humanitarian' approach (Holborn, 1956) and, on the other hand, is argued as a political move by European nations during the Cold War context (Marrus, 1985; Salomon, 1991). This

mix of humanism and solidarity versus politics and security fears essentially laid the foundations for the next seventy years of European migration thought and policy.

Solidarity and European integration were central principles in post-war Europe but were mostly centred around economic development. In 1951 six European countries pooled their coal and steel industries with the Treaty of Paris and in 1957 the European Economic Community was established (European Parliament, 2018: 3). These actions revealed a desire for a united Europe and to work in solidarity together to rebuild the economies of European nations (European Parliament, 2018), and laid the foundations for the creation of the European Union in 1992. This economic supranational-level solidarity during this time is very important as it also laid the foundations for the creation of the Schengen Zone, a European free-movement area, which has had huge implications for non-EU migration.

A collective European migration system was tentatively formed with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 which allowed greater freedom of movement within European borders but restricted non-EU migration with the implementation of stricter external border controls (Mol and Valk, 2016: 38). Yet until the 1999 summit meeting in Tampere which aimed to create a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and European migration policy, cooperation on migration issues had been on an ad hoc basis (Hampshire, 2016: 537). The turning point in a common EU migration system was the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon. This gave EU institutions greater powers over migration; however, migration governance still incorporates supranational, international, national, and sub-national authority structures.

The supranational European principle of solidarity is most significantly attributed and used within migration discourse. Article 80 of the Lisbon Treaty committed the EU to the 'principle of solidarity and fair sharing or responsibility' as a governing principle for migration policy (Official Journal of the European Union, 2007).

Following the post-war economic boom, migration flows saw mostly economic migrants moving from southern to northern European nations due to national labour shortages (Mol and Valk, 2016: 32) and immigrants significantly contributed to Europe's post-war economic growth (Zimmermann, 1995: 47). Europe also saw increased migration flows to former European colonial powers from the Global South as a result of decolonisation during this time. Austerity measures during the 1970s and 1980s due to the oil crisis, however, led to the introduction of policies to control and restrict migration (Mol and Valk, 2016: 35). Unemployment levels and the increased number of non-European migrant populations also led to augmented public xenophobia and hostility towards migrants, which fuelled further restrictive immigration policies (Mol and Valk, 2016: 35).

This was exacerbated in the 1990s when migration was dominated by flows of asylum-seekers and refugees. The fall of the Soviet Union saw an increase in East to West migration (Mol and Valk, 2016: 35) and an increased number of displaced populations from nations such as Afghanistan, Libya and Syria which sparked the so-called 'refugee crisis' in Europe. The number of asylum-seekers and refugees in Europe rose to 700,000 in 1992 (Zimmermann, 1995: 47). Ultimately, since 1992 and the creation of the EU's external border and an internal secure area, migration has been increasingly securitised.

2.2. Theory: Securitisation and 'Bare Life'

After 9/11 and the subsequent terrorist attacks in Western Europe in Paris and Brussels in 2015, asylum polices essentially became preoccupied with security and managing illegal immigration (Lazaridis, 2015). Georgios Karyotis argues, however, that 9/11 exacerbated pre-existing and deep-rooted tensions and insecurities relating to EU migration and security issues (Karyotis, 2007: 1). He argues that the creation of the 'Trevi Group' in 1975 sought to combat terrorism in Europe and that every migration policy since has been rooted in fears of terrorism and internal security threat thereby constructing a security continuum (Karyotis, 2007: 5). This has been coined as the securitisation of migration.

Securitisation theory was developed by Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, and Jaap de Wilde, also known as the Copenhagen School. They essentially equivalate security with survival (Buzan, *et al.,* 1998: 21). Securitisation is seen as an extreme form of politicisation where an existential threat is perceived by a referent object, such as a nation or religion, which justifies extraordinary measures to manage them (Buzan, *et al.,* 1998: 21-23). This perceived security threat is socially constructed and must have a wide supporting audience for it to be successful in securitising an issue (Buzan, *et al.,* 1998: 25). In this way the meaning of securitisation is developed through its usage, 'the exact *definition* and *criteria* of securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects' (Buzan, *et al.,* 1998: 25). They also argue that it is primarily through discourse that securitisation takes place (Buzan, *et al.,* 1998: 25). Speech acts construct threats through language and can be seen in political discourse. These discourses and social practices construct opposing identities and essentially creates an 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy (Munster, 2009; Karamanidou, 2015).

Didier Bigo (2002) has developed the Copenhagen School's ideas on securitisation and emphasises the role of practices rather than discourse in the securitisation process. He argues that acts within the

bureaucratic or security structures may play a larger part in the securitisation process (Bigo, 2002: 194). In terms of immigration Bigo correlates the importance of successful speech acts of political leaders in addition to administrative practices, 'such as population profiling, risk assessment, statistical calculation, category creation, proactive preparation, and what may be termed a specific *habitus* of the 'security professional' with its ethos of secrecy and concern for the management of fear and unease' (Bigo, 2002: 65-66). Sarah Léonard furthers this, she defines securitising practices as 'activities that, by their very intrinsic qualities, convey the idea to those who observe them, directly or indirectly, that the issue they are tackling is a security threat' (Léonard, 2010: 237). In this dissertation both discourse and practices will be examined in terms of securitisation.

Migration through a securitisation lens views the migrant as the referent object and threat. The migrant is the 'them', the alien within state territory (Innes, 2010). This fear stems from the perceived threats of: pressure on the borders, the imbalance between immigrant and existing minority groups, ideas that migrants profit from welfare policies, a fear of the inability of migrants to integrate into communities which creates parallel societies, and fear of a terrorist attack (Lazardis, 2015; Greenhill, 2016: 323).

The management of this security threat in the form of the migrant is governed by biopolitics. Michel Foucault (1978) connected security, territory and population through the theory of biopower. He argued that bio-power is a 'set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of Power' (Foucault, 2007: 1). Giorgio Agamben furthers this, he sees biopolitics as the fundamental technology of sovereignty, where the managing, modulating and regulating of the population is a political issue, and power is exerted over all aspects of life (Agamben, 1998; Rozakou, 2012: 564). He argues that this also allows for discrimination between socially included and excluded forms of life (Agamben, 1998: 75). He differentiates between *zoe,* a purely biological or 'bare life', and *bios,* a social existence where individuals are considered citizens and therefore have the right to the city (*Ibid*). Bare life subjects are deprived of a political and social existence and are excluded from judicial law and of the metaphorical city (Rozakou, 2012: 564). In this way biopolitics acts on individuals and affects their possibilities. In the refugee context then, the refugee is the epitome of bare life. As non-citizens, 'bare life' have no right to the city, this therefore produces a 'state of exception' which is realised in the form of the refugee camp (Agamben, 1998: 6). Through this lens refugees require protection in so far as their biological survival is guaranteed (Shindel, 2016: 22). Ultimately, migration and border policies, national asylum processes, and the governance and management of migrants at the supranational and national levels situates anyone arriving at the borders as bare life objects as an extension of the securitisation of migration.

2.3. The 'Securitisation' of EU Migration Policy: The Arab Spring and Beyond

The relationship between the EU migration system and securitisation has been analysed by Jef Huysmans who argues that the EU has directly securitised migration by abolishing the internal border control and integrating migration policy into a security framework (Huysmans, 2000: 770). This internal security field in addition to a restrictive migration policy, the EU internal free market, and policies that indirectly support ideas of cultural homogeneity and fears for the welfare state feed into the negative politicisation of migrants (Huysmans, 2000: 770). This supranational negative image of migration filters down into national-level domestic policies which creates the idea that migration is closely connected to security-related problems (Huysmans, 2000: 770).

Furthermore, Léonard's (2010) analysis of Frontex activities in 2010 finds that the organisation significantly contributes to the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU. She builds on pre-existing literature which suggests that securitisation has already been institutionalised at the supranational level (see Huysmans, 2000; Karyotis, 2007). Frontex was created in October 2004 with the objective of coordinating the security operations of the member states and managing the EU's external borders. She argues that the semi-military make-up of the joint sea operations suggest that the management of migration has been semi-militarised (Leonard, 2010: 240). She also points out the questionable legality of Frontex's extraordinary practices such as the lack of respect to the international protection principle of non-refoulement (Leonard, 2010: 240). This shows that the management of migration has been securitised through military presence and the way in which borders are monitored which suggests that migrants pose a threat to national soils.

The rise of the Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece in 2014-2015 coincided with the worsening Syrian Civil War and an increase in securitisation discourse and actions. In 2015 national and increasingly far-right political discourse was full of warnings of the impending threat of non-European migrants. Populist parties advocated for isolationism and nationalism (Maldini and Takahashi, 2017: 66). Former EU president Donald Tusk incited fears for security in his speech to the European Parliament in 2015. He stated that Europe would become a 'breeding ground of fear' unless external European borders were secure and that Europe needed 'order and security' (Telegraph, 2015a; Telegraph, 2015b). Former Prime Minister of Poland evoked anti-Islamic rhetoric when he claimed that Muslim refugees would bring parasites and diseases to Polish communities. Similarly, Hungarian Prime Minister, Victor Orbán, claimed that 'Muslim asylum-seekers are at the roots of terrorism, crime, anti-Semitism, and homophobia in Hungary and Europe' (Bilgic and Pace, 2017: 95). David Cameron, the former British Prime Minister, warned of a 'swarm' of 'illegal migrants' invading

Europe (The Telegraph, 2015). This securitisation discourse was reproduced throughout Europe in the media, policy and politics throughout 2015 and 2016. In this way border-crossers, whether they were seeking international protection or not, were demonised as an 'other' and criminalised as a deterrence. This assimilated migrants with security threats.

Migrant deaths at Europe's border highlight the extent to which migration has been securitised and the human implication of such policies. According to statistics from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) the deadliest year for border-crossers into Europe was 2016 with over 5,000 deaths which coincides with the introduction of the EU-Turkey Deal (IOM, 2017). Frances Webber claims that EU migration policy is firmly rooted in exclusion and the 'quasi-criminal framework' for migration undermines the EU's moral foundations and causes the death of thousands at its borders (Webber, 2014: 3). Matt Carr and Antoine Pécoud also support this, they argue that migrant deaths are viewed as 'collateral damage' of border policies driven by fear and paranoia (Carr, 2014: 8) and are a direct consequence of border control and the EU's desire to control and combat irregular migration (Pécoud, 2020: 379, 381). The Dublin Regulation and the EU-Turkey Deal prevent safe and legal routes into Europe. Carr highlights the decision for refugees and migrants to take more dangerous routes to get to Europe as a result of the physical and bureaucratic obstacles that have been erected by European governments (Carr, 2014: 8). In this way migration policies in the EU reflect the violence that 'underlies the control of peoples' mobility and the rejection of foreigners outside European borders' (Pécoud, 2020: 383). This inherently contradicts the foundations on which the EU was built. Indeed, whilst the EU and European governments have and continue to proclaim sympathy, disgust and solidarity for those who die at sea on Europe's borders (Al Jazeera, 2015; The Guardian, 2015; The New York Times, 2015), migration policy remains void of solidarity with non-EU, irregular migrants (Carr, 2014: 8) and rooted in securitisation. This form of exclusion and fear of non-European migration is exacerbated by the political discourse of leaders of European nations as noted above.

Tamirace Fakhoury, furthers this, she argues that in 2015 the politics of migration had been painted as a state of emergency which required exceptional measures to deal with the flow of migrants (Fakhoury, 2016: 68). Indeed, by labelling the refugee situation in Europe as a 'crisis' it wrongly presented the idea to the European public that they were in danger of a surge of migration (Horii, 2018: 204). These exceptional measures included; the suspension of Schengen when six member states secured their national borders in 2015, the erection of physical barriers as exemplified by Hungary, and the introduction of Frontex as a European policing organisation. Borders are now heavily monitored with sensors, cameras, drones, wired fences, and police forces, all with the intention of keeping migrants out (Ticktin, 2016: 263). In this way images and discourse of 'fortress Europe' were created (Amnesty International, 2014: 5). Frontex even stated in February 2017 that humanitarian

workers in the Mediterranean who were trying to save lives, were 'supporting the business of criminal networks and trafficking in Libya through European vessels picking up migrants ever closer to the Libyan coast' (quoted in Bilgic and Pace, 2017: 92). Laila Giannetto argues that the establishment of Frontex and EU's draconian border control policies stand in complete contradiction to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the lack of accountability mechanisms for Frontex as an organisation means that adherence to human rights obligations is not guaranteed (Giannetto, 2015: 12, 14). *The European Convention on Human Rights* (ECHR) requires all States Parties to allow 'everyone within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined' in the Convention (ECHR, 1950: article 1). This technically should apply to all, whether citizen or alien, within a specified territory (Donnelly and Muthiah, 2019: 8).

The securitisation of increased numbers of border-crossers, which were undeniably partly made up of men, women, and children seeking international protection, served to criminalise migrants as a whole and ultimately resulted in an asylum-seeker and refugee policy of restraint and detainment. This has arguably created a 'migrant crisis' for Europe which has been labelled a 'refugee crisis' for political and security reasons. It seems then that the solidarity which helped to resettle millions of refugees post-WW2 and created a European economic zone, has been replaced with security fears, or at least an EU solidarity that does not reach outside of EU borders.

2.4. Solidarity No More?

Europe's highly securitised reaction to the 2015 'refugee crisis' has highlighted the lack of solidarity both at the supranational and grassroots-level. The crisis highlighted the most critical flaw in the EU migration system; the divergence of national sovereignty and principle of solidarity. The European Parliament states that European immigration policy is based on solidarity and intends to 'establish a balanced approach to dealing with both regular and irregular immigration' (European Parliament, 2020). The EU retains its authority on external issues of the migration process, but control of immigration policy remains with individual member states (Borowicz, 2017:90). By supporting EU policies nations may be perceived as surrendering their sovereignty and this idea has been further exacerbated by the rise of far-right, populist, political parties from the late 1990s (Hampshire, 2016: 544). This means that EU migration policies are systematically undermined by the discretion of member states (Borowicz, 2017: 96; Scipioni, 2018: 1358).

The 'hotspot approach' introduced in 2015 by the European Commission, is an example of the lack of EU solidarity due to the prioritisation of national sovereignty. Hotspots are essentially spaces in which

border-crossers are held to be processed and can be managed by humanitarian organisations and European and national security forces. They are typically areas on the European periphery where migrants must seek asylum in accordance to the Dublin Regulation. The Dublin Regulation, in addition to the suspension of the Schengen area of free movement which occurred in September 2015, exacerbated the huge numbers being held in hotspots. This meant the EU's external borders in the Mediterranean were disproportionality effected by the hundreds of thousands of migrants trying to reach Europe. This approach contradicts the burden-sharing principle of the Lisbon Treaty and highlights the lack of solidarity within the EU.

In addition to this, Kelly Greenhill's analysis of the 'European Migration Crisis' (2016) argues that the EU-Turkey deal in 2016 was ultimately the result of 'coercive engineered migration' (CEM), which she argues was the result of a lack of solidarity in the EU (Greenhill, 2016: 320). CEM refers to cross-border population movements that are created or manipulated by actors in order to persuade political, military and, or economic concessions from other states (Greenhill, 2016: 320). She argues that the EU-Turkey deal is an example of this. The Deal aimed to control the unprecedented flow of asylum-seekers and refugees as a result of the worsening Syrian civil war and prevent a humanitarian crisis in Greece. It stipulates that the EU will return migrants who arrived in Greece irregularly to Turkey and in exchange EU member states would resettle one Syrian refugee from Turkey for every Syrian returned from the Greek islands (European Commission, 2016). Greenhill argues that the EU was extremely susceptible to Turkish manipulation and will continue to be vulnerable to coercive bargaining in the future because of the unilateral, national-level and lack of solidarity between EU member states on migration policies (Greenhill, 2016: 317). She describes the EU's response to the migration crisis as 'disjoint, schizophrenic and, at times, hypocritical' (Greenhill, 2016: 317). Pero Maldini and Marta Takahashi support this, they argue that the EU-Turkey Deal was directly a result of the failure of the EU asylum system (Maldini and Takahashi, 2017: 63). The lack of solidarity and unequal distribution of migration responsibility meant that a crisis was created and signified the structural weaknesses of EU institutions (Maldini and Takahashi, 2017: 68).

The Deal also highlights the lack of solidarity with those fleeing persecution on an individual-level. According to the CEM theory the Deal was manipulated by Turkey and the EU conceded despite the explicit weaponisation of migrants, many of whom were refugees (UNHCR). Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had reportedly threatened the European Commissioner President Jean-Claude Juncker at a G20 meeting stating that Turkey could 'open the doors to Greece and Bulgaria anytime and put the refugees on buses', and thereby create a crisis on European borders (Greenhill, 2016:325). Essentially the EU found themselves politically trapped. EU member states were facing mounting domestic and supranational issues and were desperate for Turkey to 'serve as a migrant waiting room

on its borders' (The Spectator, 2016). This meant that the EU was willing to negotiate and concede to several previously seen as outrageous Turkish demands (Greenhill, 2016: 327). Tusk stated in 2015 that the refugee crisis had created 'a new kind of hybrid war, in which migratory waves have become a tool, a weapon against neighbours' (Telegraph, 2015a). In this sense it seems that the lack of solidarity at the supranational level directly led to a lack of solidarity at the individual level.

The Deal also meant that Turkey was deemed a safe country of return despite explicit human rights violations and terrorist attacks (HRW, 2016; Amnesty International, 2017).[4] Asylum processes were fast-tracked which meant more applications were rejected in the first instance based on the assumption that Turkey was a safe country. This meant that that asylum-seekers and refugees were left without sufficient protection guarantees (Amnesty International, 2017: 6; Haferlach and Kurban, 2017: 85). This has been hugely criticised by human rights groups as it undermines the non-refoulement principle of the Geneva Refugee Convention, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the EU Fundamental Rights Charter (Amnesty International 2017; Fisseha, 2017: 48). Ultimately, national interests were prioritised over protecting those in need of asylum (Haferlach and Kurban, 2017: 85). Again, this suggests a lack of solidarity at an individual level. This also supports Agamben's ideas on bare life. Here refugees and asylum-seekers were objects of a political game where their needs were reduced to *zoe* rather than *bios.*

Furthermore, this highlights that politics and foreign policy, took precedence over international protection obligations. In this way the deal and the 'refugee crisis' generally was a crisis of EU migration and even, more fundamentally, of European identity (Maldini and Takahasi, 2017: 55; Bilgic and Pace, 2017). The Deal undermines the philosophical foundations of the EU. The EU is founded on ideas of human dignity, human rights, freedom, democracy and equality (Maldini and Takahashi, 2017: 57). The Deal directly contradicts this. *The Spectator* claimed that the deal exposed a 'moral vacuum at the heart of the EU' (The Spectator, 2016). Despite the nationalistic history of Europe from the beginning of the twentieth century, Europe had cemented itself as a space of liberalisation, a protector of human rights and, an inclusive community (Greenhill, 2016: 332). Yet despite this, most Western liberal democracies have a 'schizophrenic' and 'even hypocritical' relationship with migrants and refugees (Greenhill, 2016: 323). The presence and perseverance of nationalism, however, can be at least partly attributed to heightened fears of security threats and the securitisation of migration. Ultimately the Deal is a microcosm of the entire EU migration system. It is one of deterrence not protection (Titckin 2016; Afouxenidis, *et al.,* 2017: 8). Indeed, one major criticism of the EU migration

[4] Human rights violations included strict crackdowns on the freedoms of media and political organisations, violations to the right to life, arrests of non-violent protestors and activists, prosecutions of judges, journalists, and police officers for terrorism, violations to judicial independence, and violence against women (HRW, 2016).

system is the contradiction of human rights and human dignity rhetoric and actions and policies which politicise and securitise non-EU migration, essentially undermining EU values (Munster, 2009; Weber, 2014; Karamanidou, 2015; Lazaridis, 2015; Greenhill, 2016; Hampshire, 2016; Bilgic and Pace, 2017; Haferlach and Kurban, 2017; Maldini & Takahashi, 2017; Scipioni, 2018; Hemer, 2020; Pécoud, 2020).

2.5. Conclusion

This literature review has highlighted the ultimately hypocritical and flawed migration system regarding refugees and asylum-seekers. Securitisation in migration discourse and policies contradicts EU values as well as the centrality of the principle of solidarity. This lack of solidarity at the supranational and individual level has ultimately led to increased deaths at the EU's external borders, hotspot zones, and a crisis of European identity. The lack of solidarity at a supranational-level, however, has led to an exponential growth of solidarity at a grassroots-level, especially since 2015. Lesvos, an island in the Aegean is one example of this growth. Grassroots solidarity here seeks an alternative to security discourse and actions.

My research attempts to bridge a gap linking solidarity at a grassroots-level to supranational EU and national ideas of migration, policies and politics as a sustainable solution to the refugee regime which as evidenced above is systematically flawed. The following chapter will outline the methodology of the research carried out.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Rationale

The rationale behind this research is to highlight the effect of the flaws in the EU migration system, both in terms of the securitisation of migration and the lack of solidarity on the refugee situation in the Aegean, specifically on the island of Lesvos. This research also seeks to analyse the grassroots solidarity that has sprung up in face of the increasingly securitised discourse and further emphasise the systematically flawed migration system in Europe especially regarding human rights and dignity.

To add to this, the current global pandemic has disproportionally affected the displaced. The lack of adequate shelter, food, water, sanitation and health services has only served to increase their vulnerability (OECD, 2020). Recent research has also pointed out that Covid-19 will deepen pre-existing vulnerabilities including access to employment opportunities (OECD, 2020) and heightened risks to trafficking and exploitation (UNHCR, 2020a). This stresses the need for a migration system focused on human dignity and solidarity rather than bare life and security.

3.2. Research Design

A case study of Lesvos has been used for this research as it has been described as a microcosm of 'EU difficulties' (BBC, 2016) and still currently receives the highest number of migrant arrivals in comparison to the other Aegean islands (UNHCR, 2020b).

Primary qualitative data has been collected from social media platforms Twitter and Instagram. The reason for this being that it replicates first-hand ethnographic observations which would have been the preferred form of data collection if it was not for the pandemic. Content analysis of social media platforms allowed me to still observe the situation on Lesvos, the effects of securitisation and EU migration policies, and the principle of solidarity. It is therefore a critical tool in analysing the social phenomena of solidarity and securitisation.

In addition to data collected from social media posts, other qualitative data includes grassroots project reports and evaluations, media reports, EU policies and statements, and academic literature. This content has then been systematically analysed, coded, and triangulated, and then split into themed chapters of analysis. The codes used were securitisation actions and discourse, bare life, and solidarity. The codes were also used to split the analysis into themes.

The research philosophy for this research is a critical social science perspective as the focus is how refugees, asylum-seekers, and grassroots solidarity groups challenge the structures of power in the migration system. This research highlights the agency of those reduced to, on the EU and national level, 'bare life' objects as well as stressing the importance of grassroots solidarity initiatives in providing an alternative way to the management of migration.

This study takes the 'political responsibility' and an activist approach to research. This has been chosen because of the immense social injustice which was apparent when observing the primary data. It has been argued that academics have a political responsibility to effect social change to benefit marginalised populations (Speed, 2006; and Petray 2012). Critical activist engagement is important for social justice and the creation of knowledge that has implications for political realities (Speed, 2006: 74).

When examining issues of power and resistance, however, there is an increasingly fine line between advocacy, academia, and activism (Speed, 2006; and Petray 2012). In this sense it is important to remain critically engaged whilst considering the many obstacles to activist research such as; 'questions of cultural relativism, individual and collective rights, the ethics of research, the neo-colonial nature of [anthropological study], the politics of knowledge production, and critiques of "rights" and rights activism' (Speed, 2006: 70). To overcome questions of cultural relativism and avoid the pitfalls of a Euro-centric or neo-colonial anthropological lens I will critique the EU migration system in accordance with international and EU laws, universal morals and values, and opinions of human rights organisations, INGOs, civil society groups, and governments.

In addition to this, one major strand of this dissertation focuses on solidarity. Theresa Petray warns about 'notions of objectivity and distance' which tends to be discarded when solidarity is analysed (Petray, 2012: 556). She furthers this by highlighting the 'political emotion' activist research evokes and warns against the pitfall of developing an empathetic stance towards the oppressed and an uncritical negative emotion associated with the 'oppressor' (Petray, 2012: 556). In this way I have ensured that any 'political emotion' expressed within this dissertation is grounded in empirical and qualitative evidence, remains critically engaged, and does not seek to pre-emptively form opinions.

3.3. Ethical Concerns and Data Collection Limitations

This study was conducted with desk-based research. My initial plan for this research was to conduct an ethnographic study on Lesvos which included observations and semi-structured interviews. Due to Covid-19, however, and the implications this has had for Greece, refugees and asylum-seekers within

and outside of refugee camps, and the immense strain this has had on grassroots organisations, NGOs and the volunteers, in addition to travel restrictions, fieldwork was not an option. Fieldwork would have certainly inflicted harm which in itself is an unacceptable way to conduct research. Essentially the well-being, dignity, and rights of those residing in refugee camps in Lesvos would have been infringed upon. Desk-based research was considered the ethical choice in this circumstance as it minimised harm. Instead I aimed to replicate the ethnographic study virtually.

One limitation of this type of data collection is bias. Purposive sampling has been chosen which is not random and therefore there are biases in data selection. I have chosen the content based on what they show about the EU migration system, securitisation theory, and solidarity both at a macro and micro-level. Another aspect of bias is the author of the social media post. I have recognised that the creator of the social media post has many personal biases and motives for posting information online. To mitigate this bias, I triangulated data with other sources as well as comparing similar codes to ensure I had not generalised from one post.

The following chapter will examine the Greek island of Lesvos and how securitisation and solidarity interact at the supranational and grassroots level, and the effect this has on refugees and asylum-seekers.

4. Case Study: Lesvos

The securitisation of migration in Europe is explicitly apparent with the existence of hotspots. As of the 28th June 2020 there were 35,500 refugees and asylum-seekers residing on the Aegean islands (UNHCR, 2020b). Of this number 82 percent were situated in reception centres managed by the Greek authorities (UNHCR, 2020b). On Lesvos specifically, according to various news reports 20,000 people were situated in Moria, a camp designed for the capacity of 3,000 (Amnesty International, 2020; HRW, 2020; The Guardian, 2020a). In this way the Greek authorities ensure that any border-crossers are contained within the hotspots and member states ensure that onward migration is halted into Europe.

After the breakdown of the EU-Turkey deal in February 2020, Turkey opened the borders with the EU and within a week approximately 35,000 migrants arrived at the borders via the Evros river and by sea (The Guardian, 2020e). This essentially began more extreme and transparent security measures from Greek authorities in their action to prevent migration flows. This case study will focus on the greater securitisation of migration in Greece and the EU from February to August 2020.

Firstly, this case study will examine the increased securitisation of migration through political discourse and actions which position refugees and asylum-seekers on Lesvos as 'bare life'. This is evidenced through actions taken by the Greek authorities such as changes in Greek asylum law, detention rather than protection policies, pushbacks, and increasing violence and protests on the island. Then the bare life aspect of EU migration is examined through forced encampment as a solution to displacement. Lastly this chapter will highlight the importance of grassroots solidarity initiatives and how they seek to fill in gaps left by the EU, national authorities and INGOs. Ultimately, those at the grassroots-level best exemplify European and human values as espoused by the philosophical and moral foundations of the EU, they practice what supranational rhetoric preaches, and by viewing those in camps as humans rather than bare life statistics they seek to restore dignity to those seeking sanctuary on the Aegean islands. They offer an alternative to the present refugee regime which restores dignity and human rights both to refugees and to national and supranational migration structures.

4.1. Securitisation: Discourse and Detention

When president Erdoğan opened the Turkish border in February 2020 the securitisation of migration through discourse and actions is explicitly clear. EU Commission President Ursula von der Levet praised

Greece as Europe's 'shield' and stated that she 'stands here today as a European at your side' (Euronews, 2020). This statement raises two issues. Firstly, that Europe requires a 'shield' from increased migration. That those seeking asylum in Europe are a threat. This is a continuation of political discourse used in Europe in 2015 at the height of the 'refugee crisis'. Secondly, this suggests that the member states were standing together in solidarity. These mimics the rhetoric used in the Lisbon Treaty about 'burden-sharing' and solidarity, yet the EU-Turkey Deal, the existence of hotspots, and the lack of relocation from the Aegean islands to member states suggest that this statement is hypocritical. It can by implied from this that the solidarity discourse is used as a political lever to ensure that Greece remains as a barrier to the rest of Europe.

In contrast humanitarian and human rights organisations challenge this security discourse with emotive language. Reem Muusa, the MSF humanitarian advisor for migration stated that 'the Greek government and EU leaders have been more concerned with border control than protection of human lives' and condemns EU migration policy in the demonisation of those seeking protection and instead ignoring the great humanitarian crisis occurring on the Greek islands' (MSF, 2020b). The use of the word 'protection' and imagery which evokes an emotive response is powerful in contradicting supranational securitisation and perceived ideas of member state solidarity.

Securitisation actions include the temporary suspension of the right to asylum with the Emergency Legislative Decree issued on 1 March 2020. This was a direct consequence of the breakdown of the EU-Turkey deal. As a result, those who reached the Aegean islands after this date were immediately and automatically detained at the port (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020a). According to the Human Rights Watch (2020b) 2,000 people were detained in two makeshift sites.

Once detained at the port fingerprints, which usually marked the beginning of an asylum process, were taken and then they were issued with a three-day detention order to be followed by a deportation order (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020a). This directly violates the right to seek asylum and the non-refoulement principle of the Geneva Convention (Greek Council for Refugees and Oxfam, 2020: 4; Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020a). A fact which stimulated 152 organisations throughout Europe to sign an open letter to Greek and EU authorities asking for an end to these violations (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020b). Furthermore, the way in which these actions were reportedly carried out suggests a lack of respect for human rights and dignity and supports the view that non-citizens on the EU's external border are effectively 'bare life.' The detention orders were issued and distributed in Greek and contained a 48-hour deadline to appeal. Yet the unfamiliarity with the Greek language by those arriving at the port and that lawyers were initially denied access to the port meant that it was almost impossible to appeal the decision (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020a).

Also, the conditions and treatment of those detained further supports the 'bare life' theory. On the 13th March Legal Centre Lesvos reported that for the previous ten days 574 people, including vulnerable men, women and unaccompanied minors, were being detained in the port of Mytilene (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020a). Many were forced to sleep outside without shelter. After being transferred to a military vessel, medical care was only granted for extreme cases and essentially, they were 'detained in conditions that can only be described as a violent assault on human dignity' (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020a). They were being held in overcrowded conditions with no access to a minimum standard of sanitation, even during a public health emergency (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020a). This is also supported by a video from the BBC which showed children detained behind metal gates at Mytilene port. The children were sleeping outside and stated that they did not have enough food (BBC, 2020). MSF suspended their activities in Lesvos in March 2020 as they refused to be complicit in a 'system we consider to be both unfair and inhumane' and that they 'will not allow our assistance to be instrumentalised for a mass expulsion operation' (MSF, 2020c). This discourse again challenges the supranational rhetoric and national securitisation actions taken in the hotspots.

In April 2020 after significant pressure was applied to Greek authorities by NGOs and the EU Commission (The Guardian, 2020d), Greece allowed the resumption of the right to asylum (Greek Council for Refugees and Oxfam, 2020: 4). The existence of the International Protection Law (Law 4636/2019) and the May Amendments (law 4686/2020), however, essentially reduced the fundamental guarantees of Greek asylum and reception centres, allows for greater periods of detention, prevents access to a fair asylum process with greater obstacles to the appeal process, and ultimately does not ensure the rights of people seeking protection (Ibid, 2020: 5). This means that detention has increasingly become the default rule for managing migration (Ibid, 2020: 3). Securitisation then, at the national level in Greece seems to take priority over protection. What this also shows, however, is that supranational and national policies and actions are consistently monitored and held accountable by NGOs and civil society, ultimately those who claim to publicly stand in solidarity with those that are affected by EU migration policies.

4.2. Securitisation: Pushbacks

In addition to suspending asylum claims and ensuring that migrants were detained and deported, securitisation has been played out on the EU's external borders through 'pushbacks'. Pushbacks have been a frequent action which has prevented, expelled, or returned migrants towards Turkey both at land and sea. A 'pushback' is defined as a 'practice by authorities of preventing people from seeking protection on their territory by forcibly returning them to another country' (Belgrade Centre for

Human Rights, *et al.,* 2017: 4). Pushbacks violate Article 3 and 4 of the Council of Europe's Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) which prohibits torture and non-humane or degrading treatment and the 'collective expulsion of aliens' (Mare Liberum 2020h). It also violates the non-refoulment principle of refugee international protection law (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020; Mare Liberum 2020h; New York Times, 2020). As well as violating human rights and international laws, the nature of pushbacks tends to be quite violent (Mare Liberum 2020h). Mare Liberum strongly condemned these actions as creating more risk and violence to those who wish to seek asylum and adds another level of inhumanity to European border control, 'if human lives are worth less than the protection of European borders, then not much remains of 'European values'' (Mare Liberum, 2020h). According to evidence from three independent watchdogs, two academic researchers, and the Turkish coastguard from March to August 2020 at least 1,072 asylum-seekers were push-backed at sea from Greece (The New York Times, 2020).[5]

Alarm Phone, a grassroots project which was created to provide a hotline for refugees in distress in the Mediterranean Sea, has systematically reported pushbacks on Twitter. On the 4th June they posted a thread of text, images, and videos which depicted violent pushbacks occurring in the Aegean. According to the thread which was supported by visual evidence filmed by migrants in the dinghy, three boats had called Alarm Phone in distress in Greek waters and two boats with 70 people were pushed back towards Turkey and picked up by the Turkish coastguard (Alarm Phone, 2020c). The third boat stated that they had their engine attacked by masked men and were pushed back towards Turkey, however, they managed to paddle towards Lesvos and reached the Greek shore after twenty-eight hours at sea (Alarm Phone, 2020c). Whilst in this instance it was unclear who the masked men were, an investigation by Der Spiegel and partners supported with videos, eyewitnesses and geodata, revealed that the Greek coastguard had intercepted boats, transferred people onto life rafts, towed them towards Turkey, and then abandoned them in Turkish waters (Der Spiegel, 2020). Indeed, they state that 'the material shows beyond doubt: in the eastern Aegean, European values are being sacrificed in the name of protecting its external borders' (Der Spiegel, 2020). The implications of this are two-fold. Firstly, this suggests that those trying to reach Greek shores are not refugees fleeing war or persecution but rather 'others' that require emergency measures to manage them. Secondly, this reinforces Agamben's ideas on 'bare life' and refugees. As non-citizens these men, women and

[5] Pushbacks are not new actions taken by the Greek authorities. Human Rights Watch (2015) reported an incident in the Aegean Sea in 2015 and push-backed towards Turkey. Mobile Info Team (2019), a grassroots organisation that provides asylum assistance in Northern Greece, also collated 27 reports of illegal pushbacks on the Evros River between August 2018 and August 2019. The extent of these pushbacks, however, have greatly increased since the start of the pandemic (Der Spiegel, 2020; Mare Liberum 2020h; The New York Times: 2020).

children are not perceived as humans, but biological beings to be expelled as threats to national sovereignty.

More alarmingly tweets from August provide evidence that EU member states may also be involved in pushbacks. On the 16th August images of a large German navy boat is seen with a migrant dinghy in the foreground (Mare Liberum, 2020b). The migrants in the image were picked up by the Turkish coastguard and they claimed that a push-back had occurred but it is unclear whether the German crew were actively involved, however, they did watch while a boat was in distress and not attempt to rescue (Mare Liberum, 2020b). This is also highlights the lack of solidarity that European coastguards have with people clearly in distress on Europe's external borders. It reinforces the idea that security and the protection of the border is more important than human life. MSF state that the European focus on border control, deterrence and containment undermines the development of humane and efficient asylum and reception centres and the relocation of people into Europe (MSF, 2020). On the other hand, grassroots organisations such as Alarm Phone that coordinate rescue attempts of those in distress and Mare Liberum that comment on human rights violations and monitor actions which may go unaccountable otherwise, and in general stand in solidarity with those fleeing persecution present an alternative to supranational and national securitisation of migration.

When questioned by the Civil Liberties Committee in July, the Greek Ministers for Citizen Protection Michalis Chrisochoidis, and for Migration and Asylum, Notis Mitarakis, dismissed the accusations, describing them as 'fake news', and underlined the key role that Greece plays in 'keeping EU borders safe, always respecting fundamental rights' (European Parliament, 2020). A further statement release in August by Mitarakis argued that 'Greece implements a strict but fair immigration policy and fully respects its obligations under international law' (Hellenic Republic, 2020). This discourse suggests a lack of solidarity with migrants at an individual-level but seeks to reinforce supranational solidarity by evoking a shared European commitment to protecting borders. This also feeds into the security discourse. Human beings are not mentioned in this statement and the use of the lexical choice 'safe' suggests that those seeking asylum are threats to not only Greece but all of Europe. This also goes some way in explaining why the pushbacks occurred.

Protests and violence by Greek citizens and far-right political groups support these ideas on deterrence and that migrants, it seems are no longer welcome in Europe. The opening shots of a video published in a multimedia report by two German photojournalists, Raphael Knipping and Michael Trammer (2020), in Lesvos show the cemetery of life jackets burning. According to the report it was

set on fire by locals enraged by the announcement of new closed camps.[6] Community leader, Apostolon Apostolos, stated that only ten percent of the citizens of Lesvos in 2020 supported or welcomed refugees (Knipping and Trammer, 2020). He claims that this is due to the decrease in livelihoods, reduction of tourism, and the increase in violence on the islands. This is supported by other reports and filmed evidence from February and March 2020. They show the deployment of Greek riot police on Lesvos after local protests and citizens clashing with the authorities (Better Days NGO, 2020a; Knipping and Trammer, 2020; AlJazeera, 2020a). This was exacerbated with violence against refugees, NGO workers, and journalists in March. On the 1st a video shows a group of islanders trying to push a dinghy full of men, women, and children away from the Port of Thermi with sticks and refusing to let them disembark (Knipping and Trammer, 2020; AlJazeera, 2020a). At the same time a UNHCR staff member was threatened as he tried to intervene. Trammer who was documenting the situation was assaulted and his camera thrown into the water, he later left the island after receiving a thread of online abuse (Ibid).

Further violence against humanitarian workers showed the extent of feelings on Lesvos. Mare Liberum were threatened when a group poured gasoline on its decks (Aljazeera, 2020a). NGO workers travelling by cars to and from the refugee camps were frequently the subjects of violence in March which led to many fearing for their safety and leaving the island. Indeed, a common idea by far-right political groups and parts of Greek society is that NGO workers are a pull factor for refugees (Knipping and Trammer, 2020). Apostolon Apostolos likened NGO workers to 'the mob' (Ibid). This culminated with the capitalisation of Neo-Nazi groups from around Europe using Lesvos as a stage for far-right politics with slogans such as 'defend Europe!' and claimed to stand in solidarity with Greece (Al Jazeera, 2020a). Therefore it can be inferred from this that in addition to being viewed on the supranational-level as political and security threats and consequently treated as biological objects to hold on the EU's external borders, on the local-level migrants are viewed as an immediate threat to Greek livelihoods which marks the refugee as an immediate and political threat and justifies emergency actions.

4.3. Encampment: 'Moria is a Hell'

The 'bare life' of refugees and asylum-seekers and the continuation of supranational fears of security on the ground, is most explicitly evident with the use of refugee camps as a solution to displacement. Evidence of this is shown through the living conditions and lack of human rights in Moria refugee

[6] In February 2020 the minister of Migration and Asylum, Notis Mitarakis, announced the creation of closed migrant camps in order to decongest the essentially open-air camps which currently exist (Al Jazeera, 2020a).

camp. Firstly, the camp is surrounded by metal fences and barbed wire (Better Days NGO, 2020; MSF, 2020a), which supports the securitisation theory. A video from NGO Lava Project shows wide shot images of Moria with thousands of tents and makeshift shelters cramped together (The Lava Project Lesvos, 2020). The danger of such conditions is evidenced by the frequent fires in the camp (Mare Liberum, 2020a; Refugee4refugees, 2020a). Some shelters are UNHCR mandated tents in the immediate camp, however, many have created their own shelters with available materials in the surrounding Olive Groves as the population of the camp has grown (The Lava Project Lesvos, 2020). Franziska Grillmeier, a journalist based on Lesvos, tweeted a thread of images in June 2020 to highlight the precarity of the makeshift shelters and the lack of humane living conditions. These images show shelters that have been created through tying blankets, plastics and mesh together (Franziska Grillmeier, 2020c). Other images show shelters covered with branches to ensure that the direct summer heat is kept off those inside (Franziska Grillmeier, 2020c). This supports the concept that those within camps are reduced to 'bare life' objects where only their biological needs are met (Agamben, 1998: 75).

The long queues required to access any form of basic needs also highlights the lack of care afforded to the camp by the Greek authorities and highlights the reduced capacity of NGOs and grassroots organisations. Reports from Moria by NGOs state that queues are so long for food, water, and medical care that many people sleep in the line to ensure they get access to what they need (IRC, 2020: 4). The desperation and lack of adequate supplies, medical staff, and further evidence of severe overcrowding is portrayed through a video tweeted by Grillmeier. The video depicts many people in a tight enclosed space waiting for their children to be vaccinated against measles, mumps, and rubella. The desperation is very apparent as parents try to use physical force to reach the front of the queue or pass the Hellenic National Public Health official and enter the medical facility (Franziska Grillmeier, 2020g). Even the line for the local supermarket, which is the only place that residents can use the cash card which they are provided with, requires that people wait in line for up to three days to get inside, especially after Lidl began to refuse entry to the residents of Moria (Mare Liberum, 2020e). On top of this, often queuing at the local supermarket forfeits a place in the queue for daily food distribution within the camp (Mare Liberum, 2020e). This shows that even access to food, which according to Agamben would constitute a biological need and more significantly a basic human right, is precarious.

Reports on the dangerous environment within the camp are also a daily occurrence. NGOs, grassroots organisations and journalists frequently describe the violence inside Moria including fights, stabbings, and even boys as young as sixteen being killed (Franziska Grillmeier, 2020d; Human Rights Watch, 2019; Lighthouse Relief, 2020; Mare Liberum, 2020d; The Guardian 2020a). Gender based violence is also another threat which is rife throughout Moria (HRW, 2019). A video created by Mare Liberum

(2020d) tells the story of three single women living inside Moria. They describe how fearful they are to leave their containers and use the shared toilets. They also report on how young boys and men frequently try and enter their spaces with weapons, steal their belongings, and how terrified they are that they will be raped. One young woman from Afghanistan states that when she reported an incident to the Greek police, they told her that 'if your safety is important for you, you should not have come to Greece' (Mare Liberum, 2020d). In 2018 a report produced by the International Rescue Committee highlighted the extent of mental health and psychological issues apparent in Moria. Their survey showed that 30 percent of IRC clients had attempted suicide and 60 percent had considered it (IRC, 2018: 1). Indeed, the detrimental effects that living conditions, general precarity, and violations of human rights and dignity, also greatly affect young children which further highlights the extent and significance of terrible conditions in which people are forced to live. According to MSF in July and August 2019 73 children were referred to their teams, three had attempted suicide and 17 were self-harming (MSF, 2019), and Mare Liberum also consistently reports on the numbers of people that attempt and commit suicide (Mare Liberum, 2020h). Katerina Rozakou argues that refugee management emphasises biopolitical conceptualisation and reflects how contemporary societies view refugees and asylum-seekers (Rozakou, 2012: 564). The camp has been described as 'the formation of a global space for the 'humanitarian' management of the most unthinkable and undesirable populations of the planet' (Agier, 2002: 320). The dangerous and overcrowded living conditions with an apparent lack of human dignity supports this view. It seems that Moria is indeed a space for Europe's undesirables.

In addition to the refugee and asylum-seeker being isolated within a space where their needs are reduced to biology and refused political rights, Agamben calls the space in which this occurs the 'state of exception' (Agamben, 1998: 78). By viewing refugees as external to the national and global system of identification and rights, refugees are exceptional others which require 'exceptional modes of governance' (Ramsay, 2020: 5). According to the ECHR all State Parties are required to 'secure to everyone within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined' in the Convention (ECHR, 1950: Article 1). Despite this, one very explicit example of the securitisation of asylum-seekers on the Aegean islands and Agamben's concepts of 'bare life' and 'state of exception' is the arbitrary and discriminatory restriction of movement of refugees and asylum-seekers during the COVID-19 pandemic (HRW, 2020). Refugee camps were locked down on the 22nd March and have continuedly been subject to extended restrictions despite the resumption of freedom of movement for Greek citizens since the 4th May. At the time of writing the Greek authorities extended the camp lockdown for the sixth time until the 31st August. This has been condemned as discriminatory and arbitrary as there has not been one case of COVID within the camps (HRW, 2020; MSF, 2020).

The restrictions also mean that those whose asylum applications are rejected have no way to appeal the decision and do not have access to legal support. Migrants have ten days to appeal an asylum decision, yet the camp restrictions mean that anyone found leaving the camp can be fined €150 even if they require free legal aid (Franziska Grillmeier, 2020a; Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020). This also violates Article 71(3) of Greek asylum law which states that asylum-seekers 'shall be provided, upon their request, with free legal assistance in the procedures before the Appeals Authority' (Law 4636/2019). Despite the clear need for protection, refugees and asylum-seekers continue to be held in detention centres for long periods of time, stuck in a limbo of structural and physical violence.

An extremely emotive video was posted by Mare Liberum to highlight the inhumanity of camp lockdown. The video shows a man holding a small child speaking passionately and protesting to the Greek and international community and asking for the immediate evacuation of the camps. He calls out for a solution to the refugees of Moria, highlights the lack of social-distancing, and lack of protections given to them in the overcrowded camps:

> *'there is coronavirus here, they don't give us protections, not even soap, all the NGOs cannot continue working...we have been abandoned here'* (Mare Liberum, 2020c).

He also highlights the lack of electricity, hot water and no decent food which is corroborated by many different NGOs and journalists on social media platforms (Europe Must Act, 2020; Mare Liberum, 2020c). MSF have publicly condemned these restrictions stating that 'COVID-19 should not be used as a tool to detain migrants and refugees' (MSF, 2020). MSF Field Coordinator in Lesvos, Marco Sandrone, states that the restrictions mean that there is 'no possibility to escape the dangerous conditions' and that 'misery' and 'trauma' which are so ingrained in everyday life is so extreme that he had a child in the MSF clinic asking to die rather than go back to Moria (MSF, 2020; see also Franziska Grillmeier, 2020f). The video of this protest and the frequent protests and hunger strikes by refugees and asylum-seekers on Lesvos (Better Days NGO, 2020a; Franziska Grillmeier, 2020d; The Guardian 2020a) however, challenges Agamben's 'bare life' theory. According to Agamben objects of bare life do not have political rights, yet individuals and communities within the camps have protested their situation and living conditions.

Encampment, overcrowded living space with precarious shelters and lack of protection, and the arbitrary restriction of movement shows the effect of securitisation on the lives of those in Moria. The lack of solidarity shown with individuals by the EU and Greek authorities is extremely explicit.

4.4. Solidarity

So far this chapter has provided evidence on how solidarity is shown through discourse in political EU rhetoric and how human rights organisations seek to challenge securitisation discourse through speech acts which evoke solidarity. Actions of solidarity by grassroots organisations also counter and subvert the principle of supranational solidarity, securitisation actions, and the view of refugees as objects of bare life.

'Solidarity' has become an integral and widespread part of migration scholarship (Tazzioli and Walters, 2019: 176). Solidarity in the EU migration system stresses the importance of 'burden-sharing' on the supranational-level. This element, however, has been undermined by state sovereignty and heightened security fears since 2015. In contrast, at the grassroots-level solidarity organisations and civil society groups proliferated in 2015 and has remained a vital part of the refugee regime on the ground in the Aegean and the Greek mainland. This solidarity aligns with the individual. In this way these groups fill institutional voids left by the EU (Cederquist, 2019: 513).

The first on the scene in 2015 in Greece were civil society groups, local and international individuals and volunteers that grew into grassroots solidarity initiatives or small NGOs, and other grassroots organisations. The UNHCR and INGOs were mostly absent in the first couple of months due to the political complexity of the situation (Guribye and Mydland, 2018: 359). The Greek authorities, as shown above, have increasingly changed their asylum policies to ones of deterrence and detention. The intransigence of EU member states that have stood in opposition to fair relocation schemes, and their political rhetoric and securitisation actions have fostered a hostile environment. This has had significant repercussions on the ground in the Aegean which is evidenced through the violence on land and at sea. Solidarity at the grassroots-level then is extremely significant and required to ensure that asylum-seekers and refugees receive basic humanitarian aid, human rights including the right to asylum, legal aid, and freedom of movement, and lobby INGOs, councils, national authorities, and EU bodies to fundamentally change the migration system in Europe.

Solidarity in political discourse refers to existing 'elements of interconnection and responsibility across great distances and inequality of status and situation' (Tazzioli and Walters, 2019: 179). Solidarity 'emphasises lateral and anti-hierarchical relatedness' (Rozakou, 2017: 100). Traditional humanitarianism is separated from solidarity initiatives as it tends to be based on asymmetrical and hierarchical power relations where refugees and asylum-seekers are reduced to 'bare life', whereas solidarity initiatives aim to flatten asymmetrical power relations and provide unconditional support to other human beings (Tazzioli and Walters, 2019: 179-181). Dimitrios Theodossopoulos highlights the empowering potential of solidarity initiatives. Based on an ethnographic study in Greece he finds that

humanitarian solidarity can politically empower individuals and potentially create pressure groups to effect a broader change (Theodossopoulos, 2016: 181).

Indeed, whilst national and supranational authorities have positioned asylum-seekers and refugees as objects of 'bare life, Movement On The Ground (MOTG), take a radically different approach. Their mission statement reads: 'We want both refugees and hosting communities to feel empowered and safe in a dignified, self-sustaining and healing environment, and we believe we have found a disruptive model than can make this happen' (MOTG, 2019). They aim to do this through empowering refugees, bridging relationships with local communities, creating job opportunities, changing opinions on refugees, in addition to emergency response. This highlights the centrality of solidarity in their work. Their 'Camp2CampUs' model creates a village rather than a camp which centres community at its heart with both refugees and the local population involved at every-level of the project. Kara Tepe is one example of this CampUs model. It is a community of 1500 people with dignified shelters and facilities to encourage socialisation and education. In addition to this, MOTG developed 'the Movement Hotel' in an old prison which is run by asylum-seekers creating job opportunities and hospitality experience. This encourages entrepreneurship and integration into local communities (MOTG, 2019). In this way MOTG points out a flaw in the biopolitical theoretical framework. Estela Schindel critiques Agamben's ideas, as she highlights the binary opposition that Agamben draws through the citizenship of rights and a biological existence, and the lack of agency of those deemed as bare life (Shindel, 2016: 26). MOTG in opposition recognises the inherent agency of refugees and asylum-seekers and aims to encourage and provide opportunities for human dignity.

Another example of this is 'The Village of All Together' in Mytilene, which was originally created by a network of citizens and grassroots NGOs as a response to the Greek economic crisis but in 2012 became PIKPA, a solidarity initiative to host border-crossers. PIKPA presented itself as a 'counter-paradigm to the policies of detention' and a resistance against the 'hegemonic principles that framed the EU policies' (Serntedakis, 2017: 88). PIKPA has been described as 'the genesis of a civic project that was an alternative to, if not quite the opposite of, detention' (Trubeta, 2015: 60). Solidarians demanded safe passage and humane conditions for refugees as well as creating an environment of equality where the active participation of refugees in all forms of daily life including collective decision-making formed the basis of the activities (Serntedakis, 2017: 88). In this way spaces have been created that contradict the 'state of exception' and seek to re-establish the rights of those left behind as bare life objects as a result of EU policy.

Similarly, in 2016 Tsamakia beach camp was run by refugees with support of No Border Kitchen, which defined itself as a 'non-hierarchical/horizontal self-organised group of cooking activists … that share

the aim of supporting people on their journey to Europe' (Tsavdaroglou *et al.,* 2017: 124). Lesvos became known as a symbol of solidarity with refugees (Rozakou, 2017: 102), and despite the increasingly hostile local environment on the Aegean islands by Greek citizens and far right European groups, Lesvos remains a space of polar opposites with many grassroots organisations and NGOs working to support those residing on the island with humanity and solidarity. Social media posts by these organisations frequently depict volunteers and groups working alongside refugees. This includes actions that aim to clean and build new living spaces (Movement On The Ground Official, 2020b; Watershed Foundation), food distributions and cooking sessions (Refugee4refugees, 2020b) providing education, employment, and medical attention (Movement On The Ground Official, 2020a; One Happy Family, 2020), sports and mindfulness (Yoga and Sport For Refugees), and ultimately trying to help create a dignified life on the island. In this way these organisations challenge the securitisation of migration at the grassroots-level.

In contrast to the *zoe* life enforced in Moria, the space created by refugees and local solidarity groups essentially claims the right to the city, in a sense claiming their 'spatial justice' and citizenship through space (Tsavdaroglou *et al.,* 2017: 119). Tsavdaroglou *et al.* call this 'care-tizenship' – a 'collective action based on community and caring relationships, a crucial difference from the individualistic practice of the typical citizenship rights or obligations to the State and law' (2017: 125). Jussi Jauhianen's research (2017) from fieldwork in Lesvos between 2016 and 2017 found that those residing in Kare Tepe and PIKPA felt safer, were treated better, and had access to better facilities than those at Moria. Of those surveyed only one in six felt safe at Moria and one in seven felt that the facilities were satisfactory (Jauhianen, 2017: 7). This is further supported by first person accounts from personal interviews conducted by Tsavdaroglou *et al.* in 2018 which reveal the stark contradiction to the Greek authority-run Moria and the solidarity camps. Maria from Syria stated that 'in Moria camp, we were as if we were sheep for slaughter. They put us in a row to have a meal that in the end was spoiled by the heat. Our children were in constant danger. Here [in PIKPA] we are humans, we can cook at home and decide for our lives, and most importantly, to feel safe' (Tsavdaroglou *et al.,* 2017: 125-6).

In this way solidarity groups also subvert traditional humanitarianism. Solidarity is based on principles of horizontality and egalitarianism (Rozakou, 2017: 100). It resists the existing power and bureaucratisation of the humanitarian system (Haaland and Wallevik, 2019: 1870; Rozakou, 2017: 100) which seeks to control and manage through biopolitical and spatial forms of governance (Pallister-Wilkins, 2019: 148).

In addition to fundamentally recognising the refugee and asylum-seeker as a human, organisations have also taken an activist approach in highlighting the dangerous conditions in the reception and

detention centres in Greece, the violations of national, EU and international laws, and the further dangers posed by the pandemic (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020b). In March 2020 250 and 152 organisations signed two open letters respectively addressed to Greek authorities, institutions of the EU and all member states, and the bodies of the Council of Europe and the United Nations. They called for; the decongestion of the islands, the recantation of the Emergency Legislative Decree, alternatives to detention, the right to seek asylum restored with the appropriate safeguards in place, a timely relocation mechanism, for the EU and the UN to provide Greece with all possible assistance with the pandemic, and to strengthen the monitoring procedures to ensure compliance with the International Convention and International Human Rights Standards (Legal Centre Lesvos, 2020). This highlights the link between grassroots solidarity and asylum-seeker rights and a dignified life, and explicitly undermines as well as highlights the structural flaws in the EU migration system and EU values, including violations of human rights and the supranational principle of solidarity.

5. Conclusion

This dissertation holds that the EU migration system in relation to refugees and asylum-seekers is fundamentally flawed. Security and solidarity encapsulate politics and policies on migration both at the supranational EU-level and at a grassroots level. Security discourse and actions evidenced through political rhetoric, changes in Greek asylum law, detention, the precarity of camp life, pushbacks, and civil unrest, have consistently positioned those arriving at the EU's external border seeking international protection as threats that need to be managed by emergency measures. The Copenhagen School's theory of securitisation and Agamben's philosophy of refugees as objects of 'bare life' holds true for the EU migration system and the resulting encampment on the Aegean islands. The solidarity that is central to EU migration politics and policies only seems to be a significant value when it aligns with member state's political positions. Indeed, solidarity also only seems to occur at the supranational level when member states stand in solidarity together against those trying to reach Europe. This has created hotspots where refugees and asylum-seekers are held in camps. On Lesvos specifically, Moria refugee camp is overcrowded, dangerous, poor living conditions, and general life is defined by everyday precarity. This is a direct result of the securitisation of the EU migration system and refugee flows, and the lack of solidarity at the EU and national level with individuals on the ground.

On the other hand, grassroots solidarity initiatives seek to restore human dignity and monitor human rights violations thereby offering an alternative to the suffering of what have essentially become detention centres. These solidarity initiatives practice what EU rhetoric preaches. They challenge the security discourse, condemn securitisation actions, and above all hold human life and human rights over politics, sovereignty, and even traditional forms of humanitarian aid. In this way they offer a glimpse of an idea of what a more humane European migration system could look like.

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7. Appendix

EU Migration System: Policies

Article 78 of the Lisbon Treaty states that the European Parliament and the Council shall adopt measures for a common European asylum system which includes; a uniform status of protection for nationals of third countries who are seeking international protection, a common system of temporary protection for displaced persons, common procedures for the granting and withdrawing of asylum or subsidiary protection, standard levels of conditions at reception centres, and cooperation and partnership with third countries for the purpose of managing migration flows (Official Journal of the European Union, 2007). Article 80 committed the EU to the 'principle of solidarity and fair sharing or responsibility' as a governing principle for migration policy (Official Journal of the European Union, 2007). The Lisbon Treaty also highlights that asylum policy must be in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

The Geneva Convention and Protocol is central to international refugee protection and it provides a comprehensive codification of the rights of refugees. Central to the rights of refugees is non-discrimination, non-penalisation, and non-refoulement (UNHCR, 1951: 13). The Convention significantly states that refugees should not be penalised for illegal entry or stay in host countries which essentially allows for a breach in immigration rules (UNHCR, 1951:29). The rights of refugees in host countries include access to socio-economic institutions (UNHCR, 1951: 22).

Two other major migration policies include the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam and the Dublin Regulation. The Treaty of Amsterdam introduced the Schengen Area, a free movement zone of EU countries which solidified and securitised the EU's external borders. The Schengen Convention illegalised border crossings and therefore ensured that pathways into Europe became increasingly dangerous (Ticktin, 2016: 262). The Dublin Regulation requests that asylum applications be made in the first country in which an asylum-seeker finds themselves thereby halting migration journeys. This was introduced to essentially prevent 'asylum-shopping' (Hampshire, 2016: 538).