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Mobile Commons in the Pre-Pandemic, Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Era: Drawing from Mobility Experiences in Post-Migrant Times

This paper examines the effect of the pandemic in the generation of simultaneous global, regional, and local processes as they materialize in realities and the potential for post-pandemic mobile commons. The paper theorizes the matter drawing on studies in the triangle of Cyprus-Greece-Turkey i.e., the south-eastern border of Europe/EU. Mobile commons is theorized in the current context by locating these processes in the pandemic and post-pandemic era, even though the first empirical work was done during the pre-pandemic period. The pandemic brought about an abrupt interruption of what is at the core of global capitalism: *mobility*. During this period, regimes of exception, derogation and suspension of rights were introduced across all fields of the civic, social, and political life almost all over the world. The concept of mobile commons aims to capture dynamic processes, as an *ensemble* or *matrix of care of the society on the move*, generating reciprocity on the move and a sustainability of the geography of the crossings. Digitality is part and parcel of the current migratory processes. Digitality is a space where media technologies of control coexist with the possibilities of alternative media use. To every form of control

technology there is a corresponding form of resistance to it. The paper examines how mobile commons resist digital registration and the process that generate a pan-European digital border infrastructure which aims to immobilize people. It illustrates how encounters between groups produce social dialectics within institutions; struggles, conflicts, disagreements, and negotiations occur, but so do new socialities and solidarities in a world in a constant state of being remade.

Keywords: mobile commons, mobility, digitality, digital border, dissensus, polarisation, ensemble or matrix of care, pandemic and post-pandemic era, society on the move, socialities, solidarity

Introduction

This paper examines the effect of the pandemic in the generation of simultaneous global, regional, and local processes as they materialize in realities and the potential for post-pandemic mobile commons. The paper attempts to theorize drawing on our studies in the triangle of Cyprus-Greece-Turkey from 2014 onward. The Cyprus-Greece-Turkey triangle is the south-eastern border of Europe/EU. This paper attempts to theorize mobile commons in the current context by locating these processes in the post-pandemic era, as our reading of mobile commons was developed before the current conjuncture. The pandemic brought about an abrupt interruption of what is at the core of global capitalism: *mobility*. During this period, regimes of exception, derogation and suspension of rights were introduced across all fields of the civic, social, and political life almost all over the world. The Geneva Convention, Schengen, and the right to free movement in general were suspended, as states invoked necessity arguments during the exceptional situations. Migrants and refugees were left desperate and stranded as closures of borders, incarceration and encampment, and pushbacks at sea and land, were normalized.

In this context, the *mobile commons* we had referred to prior to the pandemic, which claimed social spaces and rights, and augmented 'the right to the city' (Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou and Tsianos 2016). In the current period of moving from the pandemic towards the post-pandemic era, the notion of mobile commons, which aims to capture an agile and adaptive set of processes, is adapted to the new realities on the ground. The term 'mobile commons' initially coined by Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013) was utilised in the context and was developed further, drawing on empirical research conducted since then. A lively debate pertaining to the meaning and the manifestation of mobile commons has since been taken up (Angulo-Pasel 2018; Fischer 2020; Jørgensen, Fischer 2022). As civic and social space for movement and manoeuvre contracted, so did certain aspects of mobile commons, but this was no linear process without contradictions. Agriculture, food production in the factories, food stores and restaurants, deliveries and the 'gig economy', where migrants (irregular and regular) thrive, not only did *not* cease to operate, but on the contrary, saw a massive expansion. In parallel to the processes of criminalization, repression and pushbacks during the pandemic, migrants (regular and irregular, including asylum-seekers) were a major source of labour in hazardous conditions of increasing risk (Mallet-Garcia and Delvino 2020). Moreover, as states of exception

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proliferated, so did the necessity for resistance and the domains of struggle shifted accordingly. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU had imposed policies of containment across the EU and many European states bordering the EU had closed their borders to curtail the flows of asylum-seekers and migrants. The south-eastern border of the EU saw a massive expansion of surveillance and wall-building along the Greek--Turkish borders, policies of containment following the deal with Turkey (Parsanoglou 2020a; 2022), the containment on the Greek islands via the 'hotspot approach' and regular illegal pushback at sea with active support from FRONTEX. This led to the EU border agency's boss resigning in disgrace after a critical watchdog probe found that the Frontex Director Fabrice Leggeri had overseen the agency during a period of scrutiny into its alleged role in illegally turning away migrants (Barigazzi and Lynch 2022).

At this point it is necessary to clarify our terms and how we understand the 'pandemic' and 'post-pandemic era'. This paper was written during the period of the pandemic and was finished during the stages when the restrictive measures were being eased or had been altogether abandoned by most states, so we can say that we are entering what can be thought of as 'the post-pandemic era': in this sense, our arguments stand, as the COVID-19 measures which were invoked to restrict migration have been eased or disappeared in most countries. However, it is noted that we cannot be certain if the signs of resurgence of COVID-19 would lead to another or different round of immigration restrictions. We do know however that if the governments decide to reintroduce restrictions for COVID-19-related reasons, they are likely to include restrictive immigration policies, which are often discriminatory against the usual victims. This is something that can be deduced from the management of the pandemic so far. We thus take the risk of talking about the 'post-pandemic era' already, even though we recognize that we are not completely out of the pandemic.

In the period when the pandemic restrictions are being eased, which appears to be the beginning of the post-pandemic era, we are witnessing dynamic processes of major transformation and turmoil, which have been highlighted by the war in Ukraine, particularly after the invasion of Russia. The pandemic imposed hygiene-based states of exception in the 'third' crisis that the Euro-Mediterranean region has faced in the 21st century: the first was the global financial/economic crisis (2007-2017) and the second was the so-called 'refugee crisis' (2015-2016). We are currently witnessing what appears to be a *fourth crisis* facing the post-pandemic world — as there are various interconnected aspects of

this crisis – or these crises –with an increase in wars and conflict, food and energy crises, and of course the continuation and deepening of the environmental crises. In this context, we are witnessing processes cementing and generating new states of exception, the derogation of human rights, and a dramatic rise in the global numbers of refugees and other migrants seeking international protection.

This is the broader context that generates the processes that are giving rise to what appears to be the *post-pandemic mobile commons*: the harsh reality characterized by social and political struggles and contestations over the new (b)ordering processes that renegotiate sovereignties and territorialities. It is often stated that we live in an 'age of immigration', a phrase coined by the influential book of the late Stephen Castles (Haas, Castles and Miller 2020). Scholars have turned their attention to "the new mobilities paradigm", (Sheller, Urry 2006) in a time characterized by mobility, speed, liquidity and the movement of data, goods, capital and people. To study these processes, 'critical mobilities' (Eliot and Urry 2016) are combined with 'critical border studies' (Tsianos, Hess 2010; Tsianos, Karakayali 2010). However, this liquid and mobile capitalist world is based on unequal, often oppressive, and exploitative relations and racialized and gendered differentiations, fragmentations, and polarizations. Simultaneously, new forms of resistance, solidarities, and social imaginaries are emerging. From immigration history we know of countless examples where migration has functioned as a catalyst for transformation, exchange, and the enrichment of knowledge, experiences and skills. In our research of the migration/refugee process in the Greece-Turkey-Cyprus triangle, we can confidently claim that the three societies above are such instances. It is therefore inconceivable to portray such societies as if they have been suddenly and unexpectedly confronted with immigrants, as an event that has 'surprised' or 'shocked' (Parsanoglou 2009). For years we now live not just in 'migration societies', but in *post-migrant societies*, which have changed radically because of the presence of immigrants is felt across the spectrum of life. Greece, Cyprus, and all of Europe have been hosting migrant workers for decades, and their financial contribution to GDP growth has been enormous.

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Our theorization engages the remarkable advances in theory and empirical research in a critical manner, firstly in order to reach conclusions moving towards a theory of 'post-migrant society', and secondly to ensure that it is properly rooted and embedded in empirical grounding and can resonate with the great transformations we are witnessing across the globe. It may appear odd to insist on referring to a 'post-migrant society', when we are living through (at least in Europe) the greatest

immigration wave in living memory, including the largest number of forced migrations ever recorded, according to the IOM World Migration Report 2022:

> The current global estimate is that there were around 281 million international migrants in the world in 2020, which equates to 3.6 per cent of the global population. Overall, the estimated number of international migrants has increased over the past five decades. The total estimated 281 million people living in a country other than their countries of birth in 2020 was 128 million more than in 1990 and over three times the estimated number in 1970.

Our basic argument however is *not* that today we have less migration: in fact, in our conception of post-migrant society, we underscore that *today we have more migration*. We propose the concept to address *the way we understand how societies respond to migration*. Instead of conceptualizing our world as one based on 'migrant-arriving societies', we venture to propose that we ought to perceive and understand the societies in which we *now live* as s*ocieties with long migration histories and experiences*, i.e., as *migrant-settled societies*. We do not assume that the matter is simple and that there is integration, tolerance and belonging: settled migrants also face discrimination, racism and sexism and other abominable forms of behavior; this 'world out of joint' (Wallerstein 2014) is full of contradictions and dangers, as migration is becoming a major source of dissensus (Trimikliniotis 2020, 20). We recognize of course that settled migrants are still migrants, and even persons of migrant background for generations may – and often do – face discrimination, but they live in *societies already deeply transformed by migration*. Of course, the current waves of immigration and asylum-seekers are facing both old and new types of racism and hostility that require new theorization and new struggles. What we are claiming, however, is that the resources for theory and praxis are there, and this is what we refer to as *mobile commons*. We are merely trying to capture what is out there in society: *post-migrant society is being constructed as a product of the resistance struggles via mobile commons*.

This paper is essentially a theorization in the endeavour to make a step forward from our previous works. Our research draws on and develops the work from different empirical studies we have conducted over the last two decades, particularly over the last decade or so. A major source which we have developed further is our book on *mobile commons* (Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, Tsianos 2016), which was based on fiel-

dwork conducted in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus[1]. This research was extended with further empirical research during the so-called 'refugee crisis' in Greece,[2] and during the pandemic, drawing particularly on empirical findings from the fieldwork in Cyprus[3] and in Greece,[4] and continues with a research project currently in progress[5].

The methodology used in the fieldwork includes mixed methods. This includes critical policy and legal analysis but also interviews and focus groups with migrants, refugees, activists, border guards and police officers, as well as ethnographic research with participant observation. This was adapted to develop the methodology of digital networks and migration, in what we refer to as "net(h)nography of border regimes" deployed around flexible and porous border zones, that can elucidate migrant praxis, its repercussions and potentialities (Trimikliniotis et al. 2016, 40-45). It is via this methodology that 'mobile commons' are studied.

Migration and refugee dissensus, re-bordering and racist xenophobia in Europe reloaded

Immigration issues, and in particular refugee issues, are portrayed as a manifestation of a global crisis that needs to be managed. While, as

1 Under the project *Transnational digital networks, migration and gender*, MIG@NET, work package 9 on Social Movements, funded by the 7th Framework Program, EU DG Research. Some of the themes were further theoretically expanded in our book (Trimikliniotis et al. 2015).

2 Under the project 'Transit migration 2: a research project on the de-and re-stabilisations of the European border regime' (2016), funded by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung; and under the project 'Volunteering for Refugees in Europe: Civil Society, Solidarity, and Forced Migration along the Balkan Route amid the failure of the Common European Asylum System' (July 2016-June 2017), funded by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung.

3 Critical border research was conducted in Greece and Cyprus in 2020-2022.

4 Under the project "Beyond the 'refugee crisis': investigating patterns of integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Greece - BRECht" (2018-2022), funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research & Innovation.

5 Extensive empirical research was conducted in Cyprus as part of the research project *Mobile Citizenship, States of Exception and (non)Border Regimes in post-Covid19 Cyprus* 2021-2022, having received Hellenic Observatory award for a research study project with partnership with LSE, funded by the A.G. Leventis Foundation, available at https://www.lse.ac.uk/Hellenic-Observatory/Research/Cyprus-Projects-2020-2021/Mobile-Citizenship-States-of-Exception-and-nonBorder-Regimes-in-post-COVID-19-Cyprus.

a rule, authorities tend to perceive immigration as a matter of management, immigration is a much broader and more complex social issue, both in terms of cause and effect, and is the result of multiple transformations read from different perspectives on society. In other words, it is deeply embedded, deeply rooted in the controversies, fragmentation and polarization observed in society — it is an integral part of the radical contradictions and inequalities that are particularly acute in our time. Today immigration and asylum have become a major European and global issue of polarization and disagreement that amounts to a new sociological, political and ideological cleavage in society. This can only be revealed after examining the underlying transitions and contradictions that exist. The focus is on the EU, but these migration processes go beyond (any) European borders. This is clearly a global issue that is multifaceted, affecting all aspects of social and political life.

Immigration is a major challenge for 21st century capitalism. A key to understanding disagreement in politics generally stems from the fact that immigration is an important factor in social transformation — in the sense that such turmoil is like *turbulence* in the air (Papastergiades 2001). The transformations caused by human mobility are critical, necessitating the examination of migration as a powerful force in social change that can be interpreted, and has been interpreted, as a mass social movement, a mass mobilization of people (Mezzadra 2011). However, the directions, times, trends and moments of human flows are so different, and are practiced at such different levels and times that it is generally inaccurate to define it as a social movement. Immigration in general is a powerful social force that acts as a driving force for change. Immigration as a phenomenon, as violent or voluntary flows, also affects the state function of borders: it is a constituent force in the reformulation of challenges and transformations, if not the erosion of the concept of state sovereignty (Papadopoulos et al. 2008). Another important issue concerns the institutional mechanisms, as well as the processes surrounding immigration and asylum shaping practices, that transform citizenship in the age of authoritarian austerity, hence the reference to austerity citizenship. There are economic, political, cultural, technological and social factors that expand the scope and area of controversy through which disagreements and polarizations arise. Diversity, fragmentation, differentiation and conflict at all levels are the other side of the integration, aggregation and homogenization of globalization. The proliferation of digital technologies and social media has given endless scope for the spread of controversy, polarisation and conflict.

The pandemic highlighted the enormous importance of the possibility of moving abroad, migration. Immigration is today studied as an autonomous scientific discipline, as immigration studies, which is not irrelevant either to the importance of this phenomenon, the 'age of migration' (Haas, Castles and Miller 2020), or to the extremely important contribution to the consideration of this complex phenomenon, beyond the outdated neoclassical theories of 'push and pull factors', where today there is a wealth of perspectives. These range from historical-structural approaches, post-colonial studies, social capital theory and network theory (Massey et al. 1993), through intersectional and translocation approaches (Anthias 2020), feminist and critical race theories, to perspectives based on worker rights, as part of the autonomy of migration perspectives (Papadopoulos et al. 2008).

Over the last two years, there has been an enormous number of studies connecting the pandemic to migration and asylum. Some studies showed how the virus has exposed, fed off and increased existing inequalities of wealth, gender and race, which were accentuated during the pandemic (Berkhout et al. 2021). From the outset of the pandemic and the measures to restrict the spread of a virus, these processes were found to be severe on migrants and asylum-seekers, particularly (Bhopal 2020), extending socioeconomic inequalities and access to health care (Clouston at al 2021). Comparative perspectives on migration, diversities and the pandemic are particularly revealing (Arias Cubas et al. 2022). Other studies focus the pandemic migration ethics (Collins 2021), others on migration and workplace/work-related transformations during the pandemic (Rymaniak et al. 2021), or on computerization processes, examining the implications of intensifying digitalization and AI for migration and mobility systems and evaluating the current challenges to and opportunities for migrants and migration systems. They find that while these expanding technologies can bolster human rights and support international development, potential gains can and are being eroded because of design, development and implementation aspects (McAuliffe 2021). Another important dimension is the impact of the pandemic on fundamental rights, as the studies of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has scrutinized the implications of COVID-19 during the different stages of the spread, and the various measures adopted to contain the spread of the virus (FRA 2021a, 2021b)[6]. The migration angle is particularly important. Studies have examined the implications

6 See the reports of FRA which produced regular bulletins on Fundamental rights implications of COVID-19, https://fra.europa.eu/en/themes/covid-19.

for Greece and Cyprus (Parsanoglou et al. 2022; Demetriou, Trimikliniotis 2022a, 2022b; Trimikliniotis and Tsianos 2022; Trimikliniotis 2020b).

A characteristic of the current era, moving from the pandemic toward the post-pandemic order, is that the issue of migration and asylum is engendering polarization due to fundamental disagreement or dissensus, as discussed below (Trimikliniotis, 2020; 2022). The migration dissensus is best viewed as a Gramscian crisis of hegemony, the manifestation of which is *authoritarian statism*[7] in the "policing of the crisis" (Hall et al. 2013). It is no coincidence that Antonio Gramsci is often invoked, even in the most unlikely quarters, during these strange pandemic and post-pandemic times: Once again we live in what Gramsci (1972, 276) called an 'interregnum', an unstable and contradictory transitional period of unknown duration and eventual outcome, which generates morbid symptoms. This rather simplified historical schema of the long death of the 'old', where the 'new' is stillborn, contains plural temporalities and potentialities, despite the dangers it generates. 'Morbid symptoms' are inherent in the long and multidimensional crisis that takes various forms (Sassoon 2021). Today's radical disagreement, or *dissensus* – characterized by authoritarianism, tensions, polarizations and contradictions of our time – is not only valid but has intensified even more during the pandemic and post-pandemic era. There is a major disagreement, best described as dissensus, around the refugee crisis and immigration as the central feature of the time (Trimikliniotis 2020a; 2021; 2022). It is a term that refers to the use of consensus or unanimity, but primarily to *a social and ideological situation* other than a simple lack or absence of *political consensus*. The meaning of the term *dissensus* incorporates the fundamental disagreement on the major issues related to immigration and asylum.

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The EU is undergoing the bordering process as a re-territorialising of place, with a renegotiation of borders, boundaries, and othering in relation to nation, migration, and race (Anthias 2020: 141—175). We are dealing with processes pertaining to 'interrelated aspects of territorializing resource allocations and subordinations' where '"nation", "race" and migration mark important spaces where struggles about where and how borders are placed for control and management of populations and resources are played out' (Anthias 2020: 141). This has been particularly

7 This is a Poulantzian concept, from which Stuart Hall et al. draw on to speak of the organic crisis of the decade in the late 1970s and early 1980s, i.e. the period when neoliberalism was imposed in Europe and North America, cf. (Poulantzas 2016).

the case after what can be thought of as a 'triple crisis', which combines the economic crisis from 2008, the 'migration and refugee crisis' in 2015—2016, and the pandemic crisis since 2020. In the EU today, bordering processes are intensified and this tends to further politicize and police belonging and to hierarchize resources. We are acutely aware how borders are connected to violence and dislocations as boundaries are erected in categorizing the collective 'other': the 'migrant' category then is reimagined and reconstructed in relation to the so-called 'migration and refugee crisis' and the racisms and nativisms, and other associated forms of racialisation, are treated as both modes of exclusion and modes of exploitation within new regimes of generated exceptions (Anthias 2020; Trimikliniotis 2020).

In this sense, the current European *dissensus*, often framed in political discourses as *a fundamental disagreement*, is the connection between national identity and migration and the incorporation of the ethnic/national 'Other' within the boundaries of the 'nation'. In many EU countries there is an increasing tendency in many mainstream discourses to refer to a 'crisis of multiculturalism', which may be read more precisely as a crisis of citizenship in Europe (Bertossi 2010; Caldwell 2010). Similar intolerant discourses are prominent in media and policy debates over migration and migrant integration, which reactivates old forms of racial, ethnic and religious intolerance and hatred – and breeds new ones. The anti-immigrant Right, particularly the virulent neo-Nazis and far Right groups, express an intense feeling of being threatened by immigration and the need to reaffirm the 'national heritage' via drastic anti-immigrant action. There is a contagion of generating a sense of 'national emergency' and a siege mentality against 'the enemy' who is depicted as having 'invaded' or 'illegally' entered Europe. This legitimizes the call for 'drastic' acts by vigilante groups, which are portrayed as either 'self-defence' or 'legitimate reaction/retaliation' for the state's alleged failure to take resolute action to 'secure' the nation's survival. There is a new polarization in the public discourse over questions relating to migrants (integration, irregular migration, border control, and to some degree racism, discrimination and xenophobia), as there is a radicalization by new groups consisting of persons who live a multicultural life and claim the right to the city as a matter of fact: they defend their way of life and a public sphere which is very much their 'everydayness', a crucial feature in their daily lives. Anti-immigration and anti-asylum discourses, political groups and politics across the world are on the rise. Human rights groups have called for a decisive pushback against this racist populist challenge. There is structural *disagreement* or *dissensus*

over migration and asylum, i.e., the absence of consensus in Europe with resistance against right-wing anti-immigrant populism (Trimikliniotis 2020; 2022).

Mobile commons, migration, and asylum in the Cyprus-Greece-Turkey triangle

The Turkey-Greece-Cyprus triangle must be read in the context of the migration and refugee dissensus described above. In fact, this triangle is historically and structurally connected, but migration and asylum has made them even more connected (Trimikliniotis at al. 2015). On the one hand, there is confirmation and reconstruction of old states of exemption and the emergence of new ones, i.e. authoritarian regimes of surveillance and derogation of rights at the border and inland, in which must be critiqued from both theoretical and empirical points of view, as the Euro-Mediterranean countries. EU borders (Portugal, Spain, and colonial enclaves in North Africa), the south-central (France, Italy, and Malta) and the south-eastern borders of the EU have launched massive repatriations by land, sea and air, de facto imprisonment and deportation of informal immigrants and refugees.

In our study of migrants on the move in three capital cities: Istanbul, Athens and Nicosia (2016b), we found that migrants organize their mobility around their — in many cases digital — networks of knowledge, connectivity, economy and everyday politics in ways that transcend and therefore transform control. Nevertheless, the incessant war over the border regime is not taking place in specific geo-political border zones; nor is it confined to specific geo-political border zones; the geo-political border zones are not necessarily limited to specific spots of control-entry--exit, but are often diffused all over what is considered to be a sovereign territory. In what appears prima facie as a paradox, on close examination what an Afghan woman, mother of three, told us was common knowledge and 'common sense' – 'common' if one views the world from the vantage point of an irregular migrant: "Athens is the border". The inland capital of Greece which is far from any border of the territory of the Hellenic state is *the border par excellence*. Pregnant with her third at the time, she crossed over with her two children on boat via the river Evros and lived in Athens: In search of an atypical gateway to another European country, the borderline for her was neither the river Evros (which divi-

des Greece from Turkey), nor Patras or Brindisi, but Athens[8]. This is a common secret amongst thousands of illicit migrants crossing into Greece through the northern-eastern border zone with Turkey: it is this kind of common knowledge that must thought of as *a mobile common* transmitted via word of mouth and/or migrant digitalities. Athens remains the border, not only in the sense that the whole machine of control is deployed there; it is also the border in the sense that in certain Athenian districts, knowledge regarding mobility, infrastructure of connectivity, as well as informal economies of temporary survival and — maybe most importantly — communities of justice and politics of care, are constantly produced. Athens is also the theatre on the stage of which control of mobility and escape through mobility are performed in much more complex ways than in the bare border-life. The same can be said about Istanbul or Nicosia, or any other 'arrival city' in the world. This is where mobile commons materialize in praxis.

The study of migrant social movements in Athens, Istanbul and Nicosia opens a much broader terrain than an area-specific terrain, as regards social movements, migration and precarity. Beyond the dichotomy between 'old' and 'new' social movements, we examine the emergence of germinal social movements. Frequently, these are accompanied by moral panics (Cohen, 1972: 120), but not necessarily so. The three arrival cities (Saunders 2011) are where subaltern migrants, along with other subalterns, deploy their strategies and praxes of social movements; in their turn, they chart out new socialities, new spatialities and reshape new citizenship modes. In our endeavour to capture the ways precarious labour is fused with and within precarious spaces, we followed the trails of subaltern migrants; not only because of our expertise, but also because subaltern migrants are very often in an excessive way bridging imperceptible politics of everyday life and visible manifestations of new forms of subjectivity. However, precarious labour has always been theorized in the context of time: precariousness is thought to be essentially a product of time-control. We do not read the triangle as an interesting peculiarity of the periphery of Europe but as an instance of a laboratory that speaks to the global and to the present and future. This was the reading we proposed in our book in 2016, and we suggest that today the evidence is even stronger. Ari Sitas (2010) proposed analytical and practical lenses that allow us to see the vitality and importance of modes of livelihoods which are kinds of socialities, solidarities and connectivi-

8 Interview with two Afghan women conducted by D. Parsanoglou, N. Kambouri and O. Lafazani, Athens, 03/05/2012.

ties long experienced in the Global South, the East and what was thought of as "backward Rest" and not in "the West" or the "Global North" (Hall 1992). How to make sense of the new socialities produced by the "wretched of the earth", as famously referred to by Fanon, in the days of austerity and "structural reform" is made possible by listening in on what Sitas called "voices that reason" (Sitas 2004) from the perspective of the "ordinary lives" (Sitas 2010). Contrary to the neo-Schmidtian and Neo-Platonist readings of politics as the exception (e.g. Badiou 2012 etc.), we mount the method of reading "ordinary lives" as resistance: the subaltern can and indeed do speak; they speak back, but most importantly they act and inscribe social struggles. In this sense, "ordinary lives" are perceived as objects for gaze, categorization and classification, no matter how well intended, as machines reproducing the ways "the modern, waged and bureaucratic forms of domination have been thought to 'interpellate' and 'socialize' people as subjects" (Sitas 2004, ix). Our project is precisely to identify, study and theorize the "contranomic instances of sociality" (Sitas 2004, ix) shaped by the migrant struggles of passage, which re-define, spatially and mentally, the areas in which they have resided in the three arrival cities covered by our study. Just like South Africa has been "a vicious laboratory of extreme situations", the crisis-ridden cities of Istanbul, Athens and Nicosia have also been vicious laboratories producing new socialities of livelihoods.

This is not an instance, as is usually depicted in the case of societies that were suddenly and unexpectedly confronted with immigrants, an event that 'shocked': We no longer live in 'immigrant societies' or 'immigration societies' (Pavlou, Christopoulos 2004) but in *post-migrant societies* (Tsianos 2018 and Tsianos, Karakayali 2014). Migration or post-migration societies have changed radically as a result of the presence of immigrants (Wiest 2020). The political, cultural and social transformations that have taken place are such that the society can be described as having been structured by the experience of migration across the spectrum of economic, political, legal, cultural and social life (Balarajan et al. 2013). Greece (Parsanoglou 2007; Kapsalis 2018) and Cyprus (Trimikliniotis 2020b; 1999; Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2015) have been hosting migrant workers for decades, whose financial contribution to GDP growth has at some point been estimated at more than 50% (Michael et al. 2005). While the anti-immigrant discourse, racist ideologies and practices are already deeply rooted in Greek society, mainly on the far right and the right, after the refugee crisis raging attacks have been launched against refugees by the media and politicians seeking to create chaos and hatred. Policies aimed at cultivating an anti-immigrant

climate by creating a hostile environment have a historical depth of a few decades, as reactionary movements to the social changes that have already taken place (Goodfellow 2019; Trimikliniotis 2020; Anthias 2020). However, the pandemic crisis was the golden opportunity in the 'perfect storm' that allowed — through authoritarian regimes of exclusion — the expansion and multiplication of anti-immigration policies, ideologies, and practices through the creation of an even more hostile environment to migrants and refugees.

The legacy of the 2015 'immigration/refugee crisis' is the hotspot approach, as announced by the European Commission framework of the "European Agenda on Migration" (Parsanoglou 2020b). In its brief paper "The Hotspot Approach to Managing Exceptional Migratory Flows" (European Commission 2015b), the Commission stated that the hotspots should serve as a platform for the rapid, integrated and mutually complementary cooperation of the different European agencies — the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the Frontex European Border Guard Agency, the European Police Office (Europol), the European Judicial Cooperation Unit (Eurojust)[9]. The aim was the smooth cooperation between these agencies and the corresponding national authorities of the Member States to be able to react adequately to the possibility of disproportionately high migration pressure on the European external border. The hotspots should help to channel the mixed migratory flows faster and more closely, either to the European asylum system or to a process for the return of persons classified as irregular migrants. In the wake of the long-standing crisis of the Dublin regulation (Kasparek 2016; Kasparek and Speer 2013), which determines the responsibility of the Member State where an asylum application is filed, and its definitive collapse in the summer of 2015, the hotspot approach represented a new, a more even and therefore more sustainable distribution for the resettlement of asylum seekers within Europe, and the implementation of a common European asylum system (European Commission 2016c: 6). Therefore, hotspots were seen as an elementary tool for an effective and, more importantly, fast-track procedure to deal with flows and classify newcomers.

The hotspot approach, at the time, seemed the perfect tool to react to the steadily rising numbers of arrivals on the islands of the Greek East Aegean. Until March 2016, the Greek hotspots functioned primarily as registration centres, where identification, fingerprinting and the confirmation of refugees' nationalities was carried out. Until then, the primary

9 For a critical analysis, see ECRE 2016; Statewatch 2015.

objective of the hotspots had been to collect and match the data of refugees with the existing European databases, i.e. Eurodac and SIS II. In practical terms, arrivals were classified as potentially vulnerable or 'illegal', depending on their nationality. Eurodac, the "Automated Fingerprint Identification System" (AFIS, Auto-Fingerprint Identification System) covers the territories where the Dublin III applies. This Regulation and Eurodac are a response to the crisis of the European asylum system. A system accompanied by the concoction and use of vulgar terms, such as 'asylum shopping'. The Dublin III Regulation is based on the notion that "the polluter pays'" principle: it stipulates that the member state 'responsible' for the entry of an asylum seeker (e.g. by granting a visa, or the entry of an asylum seeker or by poorly controlling its borders) must take charge of the asylum the asylum procedure. The Dublin III Regulation allows for the identification of the single member state responsible for each asylum application, and thus regulates the mobility within the EU of non-EU nationals without a visa in the EU. The first classification level of the sprawling Eurodac system divides individuals into three into three categories: Category 1 is for asylum seekers, Category 2 is for foreigners who have crossed the external border illegally. Category 3 is for illegal migrants in the Schengen area (Kuster and Tsianos, 2016).

Except for persons from Pakistan and the Maghreb, whose right to asylum was collectively denied, most persons received a 30-day residence paper, while Syrians received a six-month paper, which enabled them to transit through Greece. However, on March 18, 2016, the EU-Turkey 'Common Statement', most often described as the "EU-Turkey deal", changed everything. Turkey promised, amongst other arrangements, to stop the departure of migrants towards Greece and to readmit refugees from Greece (European Council 2016). The introduction of a certain protection status for Syrian refugees in Turkey as well as granting access to the Turkish labour market allowed the Hellenic Asylum Service to declare Turkey, while not explicit in the law, either a Safe Third County or a Country of First Asylum, depending on the individual circumstances of the case. In order to facilitate the readmission of Syrian nationals to Turkey, the hotspot centres were declared closed facilities and migrants were subjected to a "restriction of freedom", i.e. detention, for a period of 25 days as prescribed by law 4375/2016. The immediate result in at least three of the hotspots where we have conducted research so far was an outbreak of violent protests, followed by a peculiar re-opening of the centres. While migrants were legally still subjected to the restriction of freedom, they were free to leave the centres. A second

tier of 'restriction of movement' is based on the fact that they were barred from leaving the islands, while the centres themselves remained largely inaccessible to outside observers, such as journalists, NGOs or researchers.

Despite the EU-Turkey-Deal, the hotspot centres in Greece are still operational on Greek islands. One can locate the territorialized aspects of the reconfiguration and the exterritorialization of the European border regime. From the early 2000s the control of European borders has been shifting outwards, depicting extra-European "wardens of the European border regime". In this framework, several attempts have been made in the past to outsource detention and control in both Africa and Middle East. Through this lens, the EU-Turkey Common Statement seems to be the first comprehensive plan for a systematic, holistic extra-territorialised control and processing of refugee and migrant flows. In other words, a buffer zone has officially been established at the very external border of the EU through the EU-Turkey Common Statement. In this sense, hotspots as configurations of condensed control in terms of space and time can provide new insights into the transformation(s) of the European border regime. Along with the tendency towards an *extra-territorialization* or *externalization* — pointed out since the mid-1990s in critical migration studies — the hotspot system inaugurates a systematic endeavour for the comprehensive processing of bodies and data *inside* the EU borders. Apart from the reconfigurations of geographies of control, exemplified in specific territories of enacted sovereignty, i.e. hotspot-non hotspot, islands-mainland, country of entry-country of relocation, and so on, the concentration of different actors in specific chronotopics, i.e. spatialities and temporalities, leads to constant renegotiations of the margins of both mobility and control within the European border regime and points to a deeper restructuring not only of the European border regime, but the European space itself. What is even more interesting, however, is the fact that the new regime introduced by the EU-Turkey Common Statement and the hotspot system is not only shifting outwards; it is also creating internal buffer zones within the EU territory, and particularly within a specific EU country; and even more particularly within specific spaces of detention and processing. This internalization of control is exemplified in different moments and different spaces: the first moment/space where someone is confined if she/he manages to cross the external buffer zone erected by Turkish authorities, is the hotspot system deployed in the five famous Greek islands. The first spatial distinction that a migrant or refugee faces arriving in the EU is now that between 'hotspot' and 'non-hotspot' territory;

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in terms of time, the distinction between pre-identification and post--identification, including initial investigation of one's condition. Then the migrant/refugee comes across the distinction between island and mainland, Greek or Turkish depending on the outcome of her/his demand; in terms of time, the month, more or less, during which her/his application is examined. And then comes the distinction between Greece and other EU+EEA member states, i.e. the distinction between application for relocation, acceptance or rejection of the demand, transmission of the files to other countries, acceptance or rejection, trip to the destination, while living in formal or improvised camps on the Greek mainland, in accommodation places provided by the UNHCR, local authorities, international or national/local NGOs, or informal housing projects provided by activists and people in solidarity with refugees and so on. Unless, both in terms of time and space, the 'infinity in confinement' exhausts these persons leading them to 'choose' the way back home, sponsored by the IOM (Parsanoglou 2020b; 2022).

Mobile commons in the pandemic and post pandemic era

Capitalisms (in the plural), as Robert Boyer aptly points out, are in the "whirlwind of the pandemic" and this overturns the logics where the economy imposes its own logic on society, something that ceases during wars, great economic crises, or pandemics. The fact that we must deal with the consequences of a virus, the basic properties of which scientists only discover gradually, creates the need to reflect more broadly on what emerges on the basis of the knowledge that we have incomplete knowledge: that we do not have the perfect solution (Boyer 2021, 33). Moreover, the pandemic is dislocating international relations, the euro zone remains unstable, and there is long-term undermining of the welfare state and public health systems, now stretched to the limit, whilst we are witnessing the rise of various xenophobic and racist populisms, as well as irrational and far right antivaxxer movements. However, nothing is predetermined in struggles and contestations, and we are also witnessing destabilizations and the emergence of different contradictions and resistance movements. We can also observe a major shift towards a new model built on the complementarity between education, training, health, and culture, which would meet the demand for solidarity from citizens and the requirements of the ecological transition. Back in 2008, Ari Sitas spoke of the emergence of an 'ethic of reconciliation' challenging the dominant ethos of domination, fragmentation, and destruction:

mobile commons may well be located as an instance of this.

From 2020, across the world, the pandemic crisis has managed, albeit temporarily, to slow down the dizzying speed of a moving world. Of course, before the pandemic crisis we could not have imagined either the scale or the depth of the panic and the global state of emergency invoking the danger posed by what we had described as a 'miasmic deviance' (Sitas et al. 2015). From the beginning of the pandemic crisis in 2020, many critical analysts questioned whether we would return to the previous state, if all restrictions would finally be lifted, and whether the new 'normality' would be different from what had been familiar with. Moreover, the terms of this 'normality' are under development.

At the beginning of the pandemic, after a delay due to embarrassment and political inefficiency, the pandemic exemption regime was imposed both in Greece and in Cyprus. The measures imposed and the order that followed show that the conservative-right-wing governments of Greece and Cyprus are, ideologically speaking, communicating vessels. The targeting and negative impact on immigrants and refugees was obvious, but most importantly, the pandemic exemption regime attempted to ideologically, politically, and legally legitimize a system of multiple immigration exemption regimes that preceded the pandemic crisis. It worked in this way to cover up the peculiar state of exception in the islands of the eastern Aegean with the European 'hot spots' (ECRE 2020) and in Evros. The instrumentalization of the refugee, which is no longer defined by the authorities and the regime as a 'refugee', but as an 'immigrant', takes the form of "moral panic" in Stanley Cohen's classic schema (2020/1975), which is now projected as an 'asymmetric threat' and a component of 'hybrid warfare'. Such a response was launched by Turkey in Evros. So, before the outbreak of the pandemic crisis, the Republic of Cyprus sent a police raid to the 'motherland', ostensibly to 'defend the nation' from the external threat of an attempt at authoritarianism.

The pandemic crisis after the spread of COVID-19 brought the celebrated 'world on the move' to a standstill. In the fear and panic generated, new global and localized states of hygienic emergency against what we term 'miasmic deviants' (Sitas et al. 2014) has generated more virulent anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric and bordering practices (Trimikliniotis 2020b). As the various waves of the pandemic unfold with the mutation of the virus, we witness accentuated processes of exclusion, racialization, marginalization and expulsion of migrants, refugees and 'the damned of the earth' in different parts of the globe. Both new borders and bordering processes are generated, and old ones

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are re-enacted and invigorated. This environment is engendering both 'old' and 'new' forces in Europe and the globe, bringing about the collapse of consensus in politics and generating a 'politics of hate', as well as invigorated forms of solidarity and resistance, by enacting new socialities of significant segments of the populations. Dissensus reigns and migration and asylum are at the heart of these processes (Trimikliniotis 2020). New struggles of resistance are emerging in a system flipping 'out of joint' (Wallerstein 2015) *against* the competing reactionary camps of 'fixers'. On the one hand, the mainstream 'managers' of neoliberal globalization, in their forty-odd years of reign, are essentially calling for *more of the same*. Against them, we have the reactionaries of the 'new' far right calling for 'authoritarian restoration' of the 'old' order: nostalgic for some idealized 'golden age of nation states', a (bizarre) bygone era of 'authentic' national or ethnic 'homogeneity' that has never existed.

Theorising mobile commons anew during the current multiple crisis

It may appear that we are stating the obvious by asserting that the notion of being a 'refugee' seeking asylum from another sovereign state or non--sovereign entity is, by definition, at the centre of this very process. The system was supposedly designed in the first place – and subsequently developed – to deal with people fleeing from wars, oppressive regimes, and disasters. The intention was that the inter-state system would regulate the obligations of states and rights of asylum-seekers, who may be nationals of another state or stateless persons. However, the development of various specialized areas of studies within and across disciplines was slow and particularly interested in addressing or connecting various aspects of the migration and refugee phenomena. For instance, important relations were uncovered between social, legal and security aspects relating to migration and asylum processes in local, regional, and global terms. Few studies exist connecting what is now an increasing fascination with the notion of *commons*, particularly from scholarship that is radical, critical or innovative perspectives – let's call them the political-ideological and technocratic *breakers* of capitalistic sovereignties *versus* the *security-and-management related studies* studying the so-called 'migration/refugee crisis' as a field dominated by political-ideological and technocratic *fixers* at the service of states system. Of course, today there is a vast and increasingly expanding critical scholarship that attempts to make the connections in what is a complex theorization and activism on

critical border regimes, camps and hotspots. However, the connection between the commons debates, migration and crisis is a rather novel area of focus.

The study of commons examines the processes that generate, develop, maintain and/or extinguish social spaces. These are seen as somehow lying *outside* the private capitalistic world, or as pockets, enclosures and cracks within the broader capitalistic frame. They are often perceived to somehow transcend and go beyond the scope of sovereignty of a single state. This peculiar transcendence is sometimes perceived as a transformative potentiality for the spheres of power, territoriality, and ownership due to the fact they are shared by the multitude, rather than belonging to or being controlled exclusively by a single subject.

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We endeavour to connect two aspects that are often depicted as polar opposites. In the effort to schematize, we may run the danger of bending the stick a little more than is necessary to illustrate our point. The commons may be depicted, at least symbolically, as a kind of *Utopian Ithaca* or *Refuge* that allows the peoples, classes, and multitude to realize a world of cooperation, solidarity and equality beyond the confines of capital, oppression/exploitation and sovereignty. This is an anarchic communist utopia of the present.

At the polar opposite we have the world of the 'Refugee/migration crisis'. This is a world of a permanent and global *state of exception* and state of emergency: Sovereign order(s) must be re-established. This is the Hobbesian world of fear: the Leviathan needs to re-establish order from migrants, criminals and terrorists who are threatening human civilization. Matters are not only more complicated, but the dichotomy above, as shown below is false ab initio. In our study on *mobile commons,* we argue that these *very special types of commons* emerge in complex and diverse ways and take various shapes and forms, primarily as a result of *encounters*, which are unpredictable and uncertain. Sometimes commons are somehow designed as they emerge and develop; most often they emerge without planning, design or intention, as unintended consequences of the circumstances that gave rise to them. We are dealing with different encounters with social forces, mechanisms and technologies, institutions, agencies and people. These can be of short-term or longer duration, they can be peaceful, cooperative and harmonious, or alternatively they can be antagonistic, painful, oppressive, violent and/or exploitative. It must be pointed out that class, gender, racial and other social factors, which order in terms of power and social hierarchies, and which entail unequal, oppressive and exploitative relations, do not miraculously and automatically disappear once commons are generated.

Access to the commons, sharing, making, and exploiting the commons is subjected to such problematic and unequal relations.[10] In our work, we do not suggest that we share naïve or idealized conceptions of the commons; neither do we advance any reading of the nature of the power and socioeconomic relations within the commons.

It is precisely via the processes of *encounters* that mobility is forced upon people on the move, the various forms of necessary defiance, resistance and challenges to the sovereign order emerge in response, and this generates the mobile commons. But this is a precarious and unsettling process. It also requires that several theoretical and methodological issues be addressed. Migration as a mass population movement is made up of many aspects which can work in parallel at the same time, sometimes in contradiction and in other times symbiotically. It is both part of 'the order of things' and is meant to operate as 'a safety valve' allowing labour and other persons to move around in the capitalist world, thus allowing for the forces of supply and demand to affect accumulation, profits and wages. However, it also contains another aspect, which is part of *disorder*: it causes turbulence, trouble and can unsettle societies, setting in motion transformation processes whose direction and extent are often difficult to predict. The *encounters between migrants and others unleashes processes which are uncharted, unrated, and uncertain.* This is where what we can call "the sociology of the encounter", augmenting 'the philosophy of the encounter', as the late Althusser put it, i.e. 'underground', the 'unique' current of 'aleatory' materialism. This is Althusser's critique of teleology in his later work *Philosophy of the Encounter*, which "emphasizes the radical contingency of events and the impossibility of understanding the past in a "future anterior" tense" (Cockshott 2013, 50):

> In the beginning were the atoms falling in the void and then ever so slightly they swerve, jostle, collide and stick together and from these chance encounters comes the world. No aim, no purpose, just the play of chance and fortune produce the world we know.

We extend this basic notion to how the mobile commons are produced via migrant encounters. The focus is thus on the *excess, the surplus* produced as a result of migrant encounters that are also an intrinsic part of the production and reproduction of populations which are characte-

10 This was aptly pointed out by Floya Anthias in the book launch of *Mobile Commons, Migrant Digitalities and the right to the City,* Nicosia, 8.7.2015.

rized as being somehow 'lesser', 'sub' and 'under'. Later, Balibar (2015) sought to understand and explain the loss of unrestricted power without exception or control as the dying paradigm of the Westphalian order. This slow but certain death is radically changing how human rights are to be addressed – "chaotically but irreversibly". We largely agree with his basic idea:

> Europe forms a space within which borders *multiply and move* incessantly, 'chased' from one spot to the other by an unreachable imperative of closure, which leads to its 'governance', resembling a permanent state of emergency.

He proceeds to question those in power from the perspective of a more civil or civilized public policy, which he refers to as "the more immediate and more urgent question":

> What is the most effective and the most civil (not 'to say 'civilized') way to *govern a permanent state of emergency in which borders that we inherited* or added are either beginning to collapse unless they become continuously fortified and militarized?

His response then was to read how President Hollande had referred to the ships that commute from Libya to Italy in April 2015, when he said, "They are terrorists". Somewhat puzzled, the philosopher notes that the President's approach failed to differentiate whether he was referring to the traffickers or the passengers:

> We must focus on what is *practically at stake: human beings w*ho are 'in excess' and their inalienable 'right to have rights' - not to the detriment of those who already have them, but next to them and together with them. No one can claim such a governance is easy, but it certainly should not be based on obsolete discriminations ('migrant" and 'refugees') or dangerous generalizations ('refugee" and 'terrorists') that nourish racist fantasies, prompt murderous acting out and disarrange the surveillance policies that the state needs to efficiently protect its citizens.

This was not an extraordinary reference by the French President. In fact, since then this has been reiterated time after time, as politics in Europe and many countries in the world has since lurched to the right. What we saw in the following months is how cynically the EU would make an agreement with Turkey to treat essentially all those crossing from Turkey to Greece to go to other EU countries not as refugees, but as migrants. The agreement completely bypasses the Refugee Law. From

the point of view of the struggles of refugees and migrants, until the EU or the world sorts out what to do to address the question in a civil or an uncivil manner, the urgent and immediate issue is firstly to survive the border and sea crossings and then somehow to settle in. This urges the migrants to seek immediate solutions and their *mobile commons* is all they have: now it is a struggle for survival; then they move on.

Mobility in what Bauman (2000) called 'liquid modernity' is about a mobile capitalist world based on unequal, often oppressive, and exploitative relations, and racialized and gendered differentiations, fragmentations, and polarizations. In these contexts, we have the simultaneous emergence of new forms of resistance, solidarities, and social imaginaries as praxes of 'real utopias', as Wight (2010) put it. Countries have been hosting migrant workers, whose financial contribution to GDP growth has been enormous, for decades. It is thus not surprising that significant segments of the population would presumably identify themselves as active members of a 'post-migrant society'. The term 'post-migrant society' does not denote or imply that one ascribes to or adopts various 'postmodern' notions about the world, but rather aims to take seriously the contributions and debates in various strands of poststructuralist scholarship, a field which we consider to be valuable.

Even though it is difficult to define 'post-migrant' in a sociological sense, post-migrant situations arise everywhere in our common everyday life, thus involving the worldly side of these relationships: post-national spaces of perception and action of lives whose self-relations do not directly refer to migration experiences but are reflected and lived between multiple affiliations and multiple discriminations. In a sense, we are all post-migrant now. For example, a third-generation German-Greek woman has never personally been racially discriminated against, as she says, but has experienced and processed the experiences of discrimination of her parents and even her grandparents as part of her post-migrant identity in Germany. The same applies to 'German partners of origin' in binational marriages who have to painfully process the experiences of discrimination of their partners or children in their own lives. We can make similar claims about second- and third-generation Greeks or Turks in the UK, the USA, Canada or Australia. Yet many of these will bear witness that they have faced, and are faced with, numerous instances of racism and discrimination that are endemic, which are reproduced in different shapes and forms in societies. The major rupture seems to be between the first and second generations of migrants, where the expectations and attitudes of second-generation migrants with regard to how institutions must treat them rise to meet the levels of their peers

born from non-migrant parents. These persons live in societies that have over 50 to 100 years of migration history, like all post-migrant societies: and the fact that second-generation, even third-generation migrants have the same expectation to be treated equally with dignity and respect is proof in itself that we are already living in a post-migrant society. The same could be said about other European countries with empires or an imperial past (Spain, Portugal, France, Denmark, the Netherlands etc.). Can we claim that even countries which have relatively recently and with astonishing rapidity been transformed to migration destinations, and transit and receiving countries from sending countries, have also become post-migrant societies, moving beyond 'migration societies'? This empirical question must carefully be scrutinized in context.

Solidarity, Socialities and Mobile Commons: Post-pandemic resistance and potentialities

Mobile commons are intimately connected to the transient and precarious lives of migrants, and precarity has become a key feature in the processes, rendering the precariat a protagonist in the current post-Fordist world (Standing 2015; 2018). This generates highly fluid, transitional, uncertain and contradictory situations. Different processes emerge via the destruction of what were assumed to be 'unities' or 'commonalities' but in reality the break-up of such categories of unity or commonality, via their fragmentation generates and reassembles new forms of subjectivities and resistance which transform social struggles and movements as we have known them (Trimikliniotis et al. 2015; 2016). This was apparent prior to the mass exodus from conflict--ridden zones in Syria, the Middle East and northern Africa – often described as the "Mediterranean refugee crisis", because the eastern Mediterranean became the most populous route and porous for refugees to enter the European borders in their desperate journey to the prosperous EU core. In our previous work, the realities in the eastern Mediterranean boundary triangle illustrate infinite survival struggles, articulations and claims in precarious spaces that can be illuminating in different ways. In the current debates, dominated by alarmist binaries between regimes of humanitarian compassion and military crusades against smugglers, the reading of such struggles may offer some pointers for alternative approaches. This is because such readings can provide us with insights into the processes of precarity that are routing, sharing and 'commoning' to overcome the borders of immigration

surveillance, suppression, and violence. This where 'solidarity' must be connected to 'mobile commons':

> It is the reconstruction and reconnection of the fragmentations or disjointed fractures in the specific forms of praxis that allows for the particular to be "captured" as theoretical snapshots allowing for both politics and theory to emerge. The notion of *mobile commons* (see allows us to locate the trail, the marks or scratches punctuated on the global canvas of precarity of people constantly on the move, as precarity is deeply punctuated in their *modus operandi*. Labour then is not confined to work or the work place; labour is a force or energy propelling us "forward" or "back and forth" that is derived from our vitality-as-existence (survival, pleasure and revolutionary imagination): it is propelling forces of labour forward in opposition to the sense of death shaping the sphere of praxis — thus time (of labour and struggle) is "*morphologized*", that is, it takes a particular shape and form, or it is *spatialized* (Trimikliniotis et al. 2016).

The question then is an empirical one, derived from the concrete situation in the current polarizing context of anti-immigration hysteria launched by the Government in Cyprus (Trimikliniotis 2020; Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2022 forthcoming) which has resulted in the shrinking of the democratic public sphere and all sorts of pressures being imposed on civic organizations for civil society action (Demetriou and Trimikliniotis 2021). Is there something resembling what we can call solidarity towards migrants and refugees in Cyprus during the pandemic years? Do we see something emerging as part of social 'magma' (Castoriadis, 1994) in Cyprus resembling solidarity towards the other as action-based initiatives during the pandemic? From outset of the Pandemic, solidarity, as opposed to the repressive logic of many of the restrictive measures, was invoked as being a creative and real potential, drawing on the resources of communities across the globe (Mitas 2016; Trimikliniotis and Tsianos 2022).

In Cyprus, at an activistic level we see this emerging immediately with the lockdown, where previous small local initiatives began to converge to create a country-based initiative, subject to the de facto division which imposed a ban on free movement across the country. This is neither a charity-based approach, nor one that merely relies on the state, which clearly simply arrested and encamped asylum-seekers and flatly refused to offer any support for migrants and asylum-seekers. If we are take the dictum that "one must practice sociology in such a way

that the ingredients making up the collective are regularly refreshed" (Latour 2005, 261), then what we are witnessing in the polarized situation of Cyprus is a process of "reassembling the social" in a conflictual manner: the racist antimigrant immigrant discourses which justify the policies of encampment, marginalization, neglect and abandonment versus the various manifestations of solidarity of praxis. 'Actor-networks' are creatively engaging in the process of making spaces for *praxis*.

> It is amazing how we connect with people from so many different backgrounds: we work together because we have a common purpose, and we all bring our own perspectives, ideas and resources! Also, what is amazing is that we connect with some many youngsters who have just finished their studies but are unemployed and refused to be drawn to the set ways of their conservative parents who don't see the mass poverty, hunger, and homelessness of migrants as *their* problem. We connect across generations, something I never saw before!

This is how an activist explained why younger activists are involved:[11]

> We are dealing with a revolt of the young. This is what I can deduct from what I was told by a young woman in her late 20s or early 30s who joined via the WhatsApp and became active in collecting a delivering basic goods to asylum-seekers who are homeless and freezing during this usually cold winters. After finishing her university studies, she is happy just to get some income to get by to do activistic work. As she told me: 'I cannot just get a regular office job and pretend that nothing is happening around me! I am unemployed now but I simply need some income to carry on what I am doing. Is this too much to ask?

This is a highly polarized situation where migrants and refugees face a humanitarian crisis. Those who do solidarity work are forced to oppose state policies with the backing of subservient media, which not only fails to support migrants but also blames them for their plights and treats them as dangerous accomplices who are sent over by Turkey. This polarisation generates new militancy, resistance and solidarity. Mostly Africans, but also other communities of asylum seekers are experiencing precarious living in squalor and misery, in camps or the community, and are forced to take up any jobs that involve extreme forms of exploitation and low-skill chores.

It is apparent that the praxis of solidarity as a manifestation of sociality and consciousness emerges via the alliances between those committed to collective and individual praxis and those in need themselves.

11 Interview with an activist, 30 January 2022.

Breaking and overcoming barriers and ethnic borders produces a specific "time and space for solidarity", in the words of Agustin and Jorgerberg (2016) contra the pessimism of our times: the crisis of (state) solidarity produces "a solidarity as a political action which enhances alternatives to existing policies on refugees and asylum seekers".

Breaking and overcoming barriers and ethnic borders produces a specific "time and space for solidarity", in the words of Agustin and Jorgerberg (2016) contra the pessimism of our times: the crisis of (state) solidarity produces "a solidarity as a political action which enhances alternatives to existing policies on refugees and asylum seekers" (Agustin and Jorgerberg 2019, 129). In our book *Mobile Commons*, we charted some aspects of the socialities generated as mobile commons and migrant digitalities: via moving, struggling, learning how to survive, bringing in their own cultural and social resources, ideas and knowledge-systems, new life was born in the form of new socialities.

From a mere summary of the ethnography of these processes, it is apparent that there is an osmosis that brings together persons from different national, ethic and social backgrounds, as well as different perspectives. What is crucial is how the vast majority draw on migration experiences and knowledge. Many of them are *migrants* themselves. Mostly they are settled migrants from different countries — a retired social worker from the UK, another is a doctor, many are students (Cypriots and foreign students), refugees and asylum-seekers who are active, settled migrants with shops or restaurants, persons from the diaspora bringing to Cyprus their own experiences and knowledge of activism from abroad. One activist who comes from Thessaloniki was very active in solidarity work with refugees who were stuck in Edomeni in Greece during the Greek refugee crisis. Now he is a student residing in Cyprus, and is one of the most persistent and reliable activists, willing to defy the authorities and risk helping refugees with their basic needs, even during the lockdown period.

Another cohort are workers and retired persons who identify themselves with the Left. As one-woman activist told me:

> If we don't do something now to support refugees and migrants in need, what sort of left-wing people are we? Where is our internationalism? If you are on Left, you are antiracist and must show your support when another human is in need![12]

She regularly collects and distributes food and clothing and is an organizer. Another organizer has been an organizer since her student years; now as a teacher is she is one of the most active organizers.

A third cohort is organized around the Catholic religious charity Caritas. However, unlike the middle-class Red Cross, which has simply

12 Interview with activist, 30 January 2022.

failed or refused to distribute the mass of supplies it has stockpiled in storage rooms, they have been amongst the most active in offering support via the 'dignity centre'[13], the free supermarket, the evening centre organising soup kitchens, mobilising support, and distributing food and clothing[14]. A fourth cohort is around groups of anarchists who have also been active in providing shelter and support during the current crisis.

This is a process that is still in the making; new groups are emerging, both formal and informal. As the crisis takes new shapes and forms due to the pandemic, economic crises, wars, conflicts, refugeehood and dispossession in the world, and as racialised border regimes are generating a hostile environment, resistance manifests itself in different forms of socialities and solidarities.

Solidarity cannot be viewed as a fetishized or sanctifying category, but should rather be seen as resulting from the emergence of multiple socialities in specific conjunctures. This more than evident in our research on *migrant digitalities* and *mobile commons* (Trimikliniotis et 2016). Drawing on Ari Sitas (2004), which has illustrated this from the struggles and lives in South Africa. With Parsanoglou and Tsianos (see Trimikliniotis et al., 2016) we have illustrated but a mere fragment of what is already there:

Solidarity cannot be viewed as a fetishized or sanctifying category, but should rather be seen as resulting from the emergence of multiple socialities in specific conjunctures. This more than evident in our research on *migrant digitalities* and *mobile commons*.

> We are witnessing modes of livelihoods which are kinds of socialities, solidarities and connectivities long experienced in the Global South, the East and what was thought of as "backward Rest" and not in "the West" or the "Global North" (Hall 1992).

Solidarity in this sense is a manifestation of the socialities that are connected to deeper senses, as forms of consciousness whereby a deeper sense is externalised as praxis, not in abstractum. Of course, it can be cultivated and enhanced, as it is very much part of socialisation processes. The 'ideological apparatuses', i.e., institutions specializing for the purposes of reproduction can work towards or undermine such ideas and processes, but we are dealing with a dialectic here, with contested ideas about whose solidarity, whose boundaries, whose definition and delineations etc are at stake. E. P. Thompson (1964, 13) notes various instances as historic processes in class struggles. From the early days of the industrial revolution, workers formed socialities built by their own senses of community in their daily lives and struggle — Thompson (1964, 583) invites us to "imagine the solidarity of the community" and

13 https://www.facebook.com/DignityCentreNicosia
14 https://caritascyprus.org/

"the extreme isolation of the authorities". As Tony Negri (2013, 77) puts it,

> Consciousness rises up — not as a utopian element, but as a real one — as consciousness of collective antagonism, or rather, of antagonistic collectivity. As we have seen, time is collective and productive essence.

We are dealing however with a process that is broader and much more diverse than consciousness as such. This is intimately connected to the movement, the struggles and social transformation in the way collective subjectivity is affecting politics and organization of social life:

> The form that its struggles and activities take, on the basis of the collective and productive temporal displacement of class, is first of all that of mobility. By mobility, I mean the constant formation and re-formation of the material strata and of the collective subjects of social labour. At the level of real subsumption the first and fundamental characteristic of the class consists in the omniversality of its dimensions of movement. 'The essence of the—unity — and of the concept — of class is that all workers present themselves as migrants, as mobility'. Omniversality is pliant (Negri 2013, 92).

The concept of the commons on the move includes not only digital media but all their uses, forms and versions. By the in-motion commons we mean the distributed capacity for action within the continuum of internet-analogue communication structures and, at the same time, the concern in use for the maintenance and sustainability of this structure.

This is part of what we call 'mobile commons', in what promises to be a breakdown of races, racism and borders:

> 'Proletarians of all countries, unite' is an injunction that today means: mix up races and cultures, constitute the multicoloured Orpheus who generates the common from the human. Break down all the transcendental barriers that prevent the singular from becoming common and that block the innovation of the eternal: that is what it means to take leave while constituting (Negri 2013, 260—261).

The concept of the commons on the move includes not only digital media but all their uses, forms and versions. By the in-motion commons we mean the distributed capacity for action within the continuum of internet-analogue communication structures and, at the same time, the concern in use for the maintenance and sustainability of this structure. Sustainability in this context means ensuring that those who come after the earlier wave of migrants and refugees find and use the same migration path and media infrastructure intact, i.e. it means the timely identification and correction of malfunctions and technical problems literally at all times. This is the ethical economy of the border crossing, which is less about the ethical dimension of the policies of flight and more

about the matrix of care of the society on the move, which is the reciprocity on the move and the sustainability of the geography of the crossings.

The mobile commons of migration are a response to a particular form of digital registration that we would describe as digital hostage or digital prison. It is no coincidence that for a few years now the most important demand of migrant(s) has been the deletion of their fingerprint records. The actual crossing of a real borderline is only one aspect of border crossing, the most important part of which is to maintain or regain sovereignty over digital data. This primarily concerns the pan-European EURODAC database and the processing of fingerprints, through which the identified person becomes a 'digital prisoner'. In other words, the possibility of arriving in places outside the legal regulation of his asylum claim is annulled. What we are interested in is how a tracking technology and digital border infrastructure works to prevent and control forms, practices and activities of border crossing, which are also organized using social media, how it seeks to immobilize people by making them a particular object of identification for longer periods of time.

Conclusion

Migration is not a uni-linear individual selection process, it is not an outcome of the mechanical 'push and pull' associated with the supply and demand of human capital. Migration adapts differently to each particular situation, changes aspects, interconnects unexpected social protagonists, absorbs and reconfigures the dynamics of domination aimed at controlling it. Migration is unpredictable in its flows, de-individualized in the dynamics of its occasional groupings, and constantly constitutes new transnational spaces that challenge and sometimes neutralize the politics of border regimes. They therefore require research approaches that ask questions about how transnational mobility and transnational subjectivities are produced and enabled, and how routes and spaces of mobility, i.e. political geographies of migration autonomy, are produced in interaction with technologies.

At the border crossing, migrants are not necessarily social groups in the strict sociological sense. Rather, they are *social non-groups*, i.e. agile networks of social groups that can connect and disconnect, update and renew themselves, but also disappear in the elusive manner in which they appeared in the first place. No one travels alone, at least not for the

entire journey, and no one makes individual use of media. We conceptualize the transnational space of these social non-groups by borrowing the term from Arjun Appadurai (1996) who conceives them as "technocultural geographies of ethnospaces" which emerge in the context of the "widening mismatch between territory, subjectivity and collective social movement". For this reason, we use the concept of mobile commons. In criminalized, cross-border, transnational migration, everyone is surrounded by many people and by many media environments, which everyone can make use of individually or by proxy. As one migrant we interviewed stated: "I use your mobile phone and give you something else, you give me your mobile phone to Bremen and I leave it at the internet café. Or you just send a text message instead of me."

The concept of mobile commons aims to capture dynamic processes, as an *ensemble* or *matrix of care of the society on the move*, generating reciprocity on the move and a sustainability of the geography of the crossings. When a migration route 'ceases' to be 'open', i.e. passable, it also ceases to function as a cover for past transit stakes, but also for future ones. Even if a person is no longer in transit, but is recognized somewhere as an asylum seeker, it is still his/her concern if the migration route is interrupted or technically disconnected. (S)he is thus cut off from his/her relations, from the many semi-conventional forms of informal economies of migration. (S)he may, in case of doubt, become vulnerable to blackmail. Digitality is a space where media technologies of control coexist with the possibilities of alternative media use. To every form of control technology there is a corresponding form of resistance to it.

Mobile commons of migration are a response to a particular form of digital registration that we would describe as *digital hostage* or *digital prison*.

Mobile commons of migration are a response to a particular form of digital registration that we would describe as *digital hostage* or *digital prison*. This is why we track data processes, such as the pan-European EURODAC database and the processing of fingerprints, to claim back sovereignty over digital data contra the tracking technology and digital border infrastructure which aims to immobilize people by making them a particular object of identification.

Encounters between groups produce social dialectics within institutions; struggles, conflicts, disagreements, and negotiations occur, but so do new socialities and solidarities in a world in a constant state of being remade. We can thus begin to imagine the world that Derek Walcott (2014) writes about in his poem 'The Prodigal, 3.II' that refers to the "the tidal motion of refugees" in the *Province of Mercy*. Whilst we may not be near the place where "the only government is that of the apples and the only army the wide banners of barley", our theorizations merely attempt to capture what is happening on the ground. It's where theory

meets a praxis-of-resistance. After all, "every theoretical encounter has some collective roots and some affinity with the spirit of its era" (Negri 2013, 123).

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Tytuł: Mobilne dobra wspólne w epoce przedpandemicznej, pandemicznej i postpandemicznej: wnioski z doświadczeń mobilności w postmigranckich czasach
Abstrakt: Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje badania nad skutkami pandemii w zakresie generowania równoległych globalnych, regionalnych i lokalnych procesów, które materializują się w rzeczywistości i określają potencjał postpandemicznych mobilnych dóbr wspólnych. Artykuł oferuje konceptualizację tych kwestii opierając się na studiach podjętych w trójkącie Cypr-Grecja-Turcja, tj. na południowo-wschodnich granicach Europy/UE. Mobilne dobra wspólne są tu teoretyzowane w bieżącym kontekście epoki pandemicznej i postpandemicznej, nawet jeśli pierwsze badania empiryczne zostały wykonane przed pandemią. Pandemia oznaczała nagłe wtargnięcie w obszar tego, co jest rdzeniem globalnego kapitalizmu: mobilności. Podczas tego okresu, reżimy stanu wyjątkowego, derogacji i zawieszenia praw zostały wprowadzone na polu życia cywilnego, społecznego i politycznego w zasadzie na całym świecie. Koncept mobilnych dóbr wspólnych ma za zadanie uchwycić dynamiczne procesy jako zestaw czy matrycę opieki społeczeństwa znajdującego się w ruchu, generujące wzajemność w ruchu i zrównoważenie w geografii przepływów. Cyfrowość jest nieodłączną częścią obecnych procesów migracyjnych. Cyfrowość to przestrzeń, w której medialne technologie kontroli współistnieją z możliwościami alternatywnego wykorzystania mediów. Każdej formie techniki kontroli towarzyszy odpowiednia forma oporu. Artykuł analizuje, w jaki sposób mobilne dobra wspólne opierają się rejestracji cyfrowej i procesowi, który wytwarza ogólnoeuropejską cyfrową infrastrukturę granic, której celem jest unieruchomienie ludzi. Ilustruje, w jaki sposób spotkania między grupami wnoszą dialektykę społeczną w ramach instytucji; pojawiają się walki, konflikty, niezgoda i negocjacje, ale pojawiają się też nowe społecz-

ności i solidarności w świecie, który nieustannie się przeobraża.
Słowa kluczowe: mobilne dobra wspólne, mobilność, cyfrowość, cyfrowa granica, dyssens, polaryzacja, matryca opieki, epoka pandemiczna i postpandemiczna, społeczeństwo w ruchu, społeczności, solidarność