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(Un)Bordered Networks: ICT and Migration routes

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(Un)Bordered Networks: ICT and Migration routes

Abstract

Keywords: mobile borders, permeable borders, digital networks, migratory routes, smartphones, surveillance, fortress Europe, appropriation, control, Greece

The purpose of this study is to investigate how refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers interact in a digital environment, how this digital communication can make territorial borders "invisible", and how in some cases this process is obstructed. Following the narrative that border is a networked and fluid process, rather than a fixed line (Delanty 2006) digital technologies should remain critical for the ethics of the digital passage, as they go beyond the territorial border policies. In the light of the so-called "European migration crisis" and considering the increased use of new technologies, refugees and migrants are able to rely on digital networks to both communicate with distant family members or others in order to locate the resources they need. It is worth noting that the success of refugees in making it to safe places is based on access not only to a safe physical place but also on the digital infrastructure. The findings of this study were collected through qualitative interviews conducted in order to elicit experiences from the migrant population. The research findings though demonstrate that social media and ICT used by refugees can indeed make territorial borders permeable, but concurrently create new forms of surveillance and appropriation during the border crossing. The research results also show that digital communication can make refugees and migrants more vulnerable, as it increases their exposure to danger and to the possibility of exploitation and abuse. Lastly, the analysis provides evidence firstly that digital infrastructure is perceived as a matter of border security and secondly that the growth of securitized routes involves surveillance where ITC cannot aid migrant population in the border crossing.

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ACRONYMS

CMR	Central Mediterranean route
EU	European Union
EMR	Eastern Mediterranean route
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ICT	Information Communication Technology
NCCBIA	National Coordination Centre for Border, Immigration and Asylum
WBR	Western Balkan route
WMR	Western Mediterranean route

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Focusing on the context of the highly mediatized arrival of refugees and migrants at the borders of Europe since 2015, it thus became imperative to investigate how refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers interact within a digital environment. Refugee and migrant population are able to rely on digital networks to both communicate with distant family members or others and locate the resources they need. In this sense, ICT demonstrates how the digital passage could facilitate their movement and explore the particular relationship between digital media and migrant experience. Notably, digital media could help to create and sustain transnational diasporic public spheres. In the context of the so-called “European refugee crisis”, the attention of many scholars and humanitarian organizations has increasingly turned toward refugees’ use of digital media and communication technologies, as digital media and migration go beyond territorial borders, transform them into flexible and mobile making them “invisible”. It is therefore important to shed light on how digital technologies which are highly used by migrant and refugees to facilitate their journey, while at the same time this journey is becoming securitized and led to surveillance.

Rationale behind the chosen topic

Digital migration became a critical subject of discussion during the so-called “European refugee crisis”. In this research, therefore, the impact of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) is examined on how migrants and refugees’ experiences reflect digital connectivity within the European context. To this end, empirical research on the ground is needed to explain which conditions shape migration aspirations, as well as the journeys of migrants. Since 2015, the role of digital technologies, smartphones and ICT has been an emerging topic which was increasingly mobilized as a new means of "symbolic bordering" between Europeans and newcomers¹ (Chouliaraki 2017). This emerging research focus seeks to shed light on the relation between digital infrastructure and migration which is labeled as digital migration studies (Leurs & Smets 2018). In particular, during the last two years, many scholars

¹ By the term newcomers is meant the influx of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers.

have already examined the relationship between migrants' networks developed across borders through digital communication and smartphones. Nevertheless, what it has not been studied in-depth so far is the question on how the different aspects of digital connectivity (e.g. social media, mobility, human rights, solidarity etc.) not only affect the dynamics of openness and closure of territorial borders but also create more complex societal, ethical and cultural phenomena on migrants' well-being within the mobility context.

ICT can effectively and timely set up new forms of networks, where European governments can rely on them so as to control migration mobility. Given this fact, there is considerable interest in terms of discovering how the rapid development of digital infrastructure, apart from facilitating migrants' communication beyond borders can raise ethical, practical and methodological challenges, resulting in implications of new forms of surveillance. It is also considering how technology as a means of power and control is used by the migrant population.

Furthermore, in order to have a coherent and more complete understanding of the aspirations behind crossing the borders to Europe, further analysis of the migratory journeys of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers arriving and stranded in Greece is needed to show the complex relationship between migrant aspirations and migratory trajectories. While a significant amount of literature on migrants' experiences and personal stories exist about country choices before setting of a journey, little research is done on how important and vital ICT is supposed to be, when the migrants are on move.

For that purpose, interviews with several refugees and asylum seekers who reside in Greek accommodation sites have been conducted. In order to limit the scope of the research, Greece has been selected as the destination country. The purpose of this choice has been mainly based on the fact that Greece has been receiving, since 2015, large influxes of irregular migrants, refugees particularly from Syria and Iraq, noting that Greece acts both as an entry point and transit to the European Union.

Research outline

The present thesis is structured as follows: The Introduction section outlines the methodological approach and the research process itself. It includes the central research question, the grounded theory methodology, as well as the sampling and how all this is approached, the types of the qualitative method which were used, the data collection process and the main research limitations.

Chapter 1 describes briefly the background of the so-called “European refugee crisis” including the motivations for fleeing from their country of origin and mapping EU migration routes. It provides statistical figures of the massive influx of refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean countries and lastly, presents the EU measures taken in order to securitize its external borders.

Chapter 2 lays out the role of digital technologies that play in migration, it conceptualizes the network society for refugees and migrants and then describes the connection between them; additionally, it further analyzes the fact that new technologies facilitate the communication beyond territorial borders making them mobile and permeable.

Chapter 3 undertakes a cross-case analysis of the main qualitative findings of the study. Specifically, it presents the smartphone usage from refugees during their journeys and the type of social media they rely on; finally, it demonstrates why ICT can lead to surveillance and appropriation en route.

In conclusion, it must be noted that the raw data information upon which the research is based is mentioned in Appendix. The findings of the case studies through interviews illustrate the level of the thesis’ originality.

METHOD

Central Research Questions

By studying the available literature on migration networks, digital technologies, politics of contemporary borders, and the way people, smartphones and social media connect migrants in(to) Europe; and by presenting and analyzing the empirical data, as collected during the fieldwork research with refugees, it is being attempted to answer the following central research question:

1. How digital communication among refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and all those who are stranded in Greece can make territorial borders “invisible”, and how in some cases this process is obstructed?

Furthermore, sub-questions are set in order to strengthen the research analysis, which are:

2. What role do the digital networks play on the migration aspirations of the individuals, as well as their migratory routes?
3. How is the smartphone usage perceived in the challenging context of border crossing during their journey?

Research Method and Approach

The aim of this study is to provide a complex analysis of an emerging research topic which is the digital migration infrastructure in the context of the so-called “European refugee crisis” and broaden current knowledge of migration journeys across borders. This study is an exploratory and qualitative study that seeks to understand refugees and migrant’s experiences from the perspective of the migrants themselves.

Throughout the years, communication technologies have had great significance in the lives of migrants, notwithstanding, up-to-date the role of digital networks, as well as the type of migration, have drastically transformed. It is taken for granted that governments and many stakeholders rely on digital technologies so as to control borders to manage migration flows and

to keep under surveillance migrant population. Despite the fact that literature on ICT and forced migration is limited, and publications on methodologies of studying connected migrants or virtually non-existent (Leurs & Prabhakar 2018: 249); for this research though, different kinds of methods based on the three² methodological research principles of relationality, adaptability, and ethics of care as referred by Leurs & Prabhakar (2018: 249) are synthesized.

Paradigms	Exemplary studies	Theoretical frameworks	Methodological approaches	Merits	Critiques
I. Digital-media-centric cyber culture studies approach: <i>migrants in cyberspace</i>	Markham (1998)	Cyberspace	Humanities/hermeneutical methods including discourse analysis, but also virtual ethnography	Pioneering, agenda-setting, development of virtual ethnography and cyber-research ethics	Utopian, celebratory, lacking contextual awareness
	Gajjala (2004)	Cyber culture			
	Everett (2009)	Cyber communities			
	Bernal (2014)				
	Frouws et al. (2016)				
II. Non-digital-media-centric ethnographic approach: <i>everyday digital migrant life-</i>	Miller and Slater (2000)	Mediation and mediatization	Social science methods pre-existing the internet: e.g. Ethnography, participant observation, interviewing	Context-sensitivity: Material, social, symbolic, economic and emotional awareness	Descriptive, small scale, particularistic
	Georgiou (2006)	Everyday practices			
	Madianou and Miller (2012)	Offline embedded online			
	Zijlstra and Van Liempt (2017)				
III. Digital-media-centric digital approach: <i>migrants as data</i>	Diminescu (2008)	Actor-network theory, new materialism, posthumanism	Digital methods; 'born digitally' data-driven approaches	Data-driven, medium-specificity, cross-platform analysis	Flat ontology, lack of emancipatory ideals; ethical questions and privacy concerns
	Kok and Rogers (2017)				
	Messias et al. (2016)				
	Sharma and Booker (2017)				

Table 1: Digital Migration studies paradigm

² The three paradigms (see above table 1) of Digital Migration Studies include: a) migrants in cyberspace, b) everyday digital migrant life and c) migrants as data (Leurs & Prabhakar 2018: 251).

Source: Leurs & Prabhakar 2018: 250

In this research, semi-structured interviews and unstructured discussions asking participants about their migratory experiences, family ties, and social media are under examination. Findings of the interviews provide a solid understanding of the relevance of smartphones for refugees, the usage of smartphone for social media and apps, and the efficiency of mobiles during their journeys. What's more, interviews give the opportunity to researchers to ask open questions and observe the overall behavior and reactions of the interviewees to each question.

To this end, it made it easier to understand more about the level of reliability of the obtained information. However, the fear of subjective analysis and bias of the results is always present when qualitative methods are applied; for this reason, the researcher should be conscious of not to being misled by prejudices and prior beliefs. At this point it should be noted that conducting qualitative biographical research about migration experiences, subjectivities and interpretations within a certain way of thinking are related to the explicit and implicit premise that opinions and interpretations of migrants referred exclusively to them. These are products of the research context and do not represent the realities of others (Iosifides & Sporton 2009: 105).

The use of mixed observatory and participatory method is required in order to explore the role of connected migrants beyond territorial border (Genzuk 2010), both online and offline (Leurs & Prabhakar 2018: 255) of border crossing and onward journeys. Similarly, this research topic has been approached through discourse analysis. Qualitative methods of migration discourse analysis suggest an overall, systematic introduction to various levels and dimensions of discourse structure and its uses and functions in the political and social context. The method used is in line with the standard methods of qualitative research (i.e. interviewing, observation and discourse analysis). In particular, participatory observation is a considerable way to supplement the information collected by migrants about their experiences and follow-up interviews. (Dijk 2018:229).

This approach has characteristics from personal experience so as to formulate a more concrete description of the topic. In that sense, empirical knowledge is used acquired on migration issues, as many cases of vulnerable migrants which crossed EU borders have been

checked. This information combined with an open-minded approach during the time of collecting and presenting data from the interviews, it certainly enhances the existing literature. Lastly, this plurality of approaches makes it indeed critical to raising methodological awareness and interdisciplinary dialogue that would accept particular empirical and theoretical challenges which migration scholars confront in order to address specific research needs (Vargas-Silva 2012).

Data Collection Process

The research data was collected in summer 2018. Within this period, a threefold visit was conducted at the following two camps, Ritsona's long-term accommodation camp, and Lavrio refugee camp. The latter is home for the majority of Turkish and Kurdish origin refugee population, among others, in the region of Attika. Prior the field visit, a discussion had been made with the interpreter, who is Kurdish and had been working as a translator in Lavrio camp for a couple of months, to contact firstly people he might know and are willing to take part in the research. Onwards, with the aid of the interpreter, our role was presented and explained to them the scope of the research so as to avoid unexpected behaviours.

As far as the sampling method is concerned, the initial thought was using the purposeful sampling as identification of relevant cases had already been made and they appeared to be typical of the necessary sample to be examined for a research scope. However, another technique the snowball sampling used, where the sample is being evolved during the research. The snowballing technique proved to be a suitable method for semi-structured interviews. The advantage of this technique is that the researcher identifies the respondents, upon interviewing them, asks them for other potential respondents who share the same characteristics of interest (Barglowski 2018:161).

In the qualitative research process, 10 refugees and asylum seekers participated, and the target age group was between 18-35 years-old, in order to have diversity (see table 2). Despite the fact that the sample size was relatively small, and generalized conclusions cannot be reached. It is critical to be mentioned that at the end of the interview process with the total sample of 10 participants, it is found that half of them responded validly to the central questions, which means that the size of the sample covers the diversity and differences in the empirical field. On an

additional note, besides the interviews conducted, the sample was enhanced by my long involvement and observation in migration issues through my professional experience.

According to Barglowski (2018: 157), the sample size largely is based on the approach to the qualitative question pursued by the researcher. In particular when one case can provide valid findings once it is analyzed as to its deep structures and contrasted with what is already known on the field or generative mechanisms discussed in the literature, then there is no need for further sampling. Therefore, in this study, sampling ended when the results were saturated. Saturation of the data collection means that seeking for more cases, while the research was ongoing, stopped when no deviation of the cases was found anymore.

The table below illustrates the demographic data of the participants during the data collection process.

Table 2: Names and characteristics of participants in interviews

<i>Name</i>	<i>Country of origin</i>	<i>Gender/Age</i>	<i>Place of residence (2018)</i>	<i>Aspired destination</i>
Menal	Syria	F. 34	Attika	Germany
Fatima	Syria	F. 28	Attika	Germany
Mahmud	Turkey	M. 29	Attika	France
Ahmed	Iraq	M. 31	Attika	Greece
Faruk	Syria	M. 25	Attika	Germany
Abdulrahman	Syria	M. 27	Attika	Sweden
Hamza	Morocco	M. 18	Attika	Greece
Laith	Iraq	M. 17	Attika	Germany
Muhammad	Syria	M. 24	Attika	Germany
Hakan	Iran	M. 18	Attika	United Kingdom

Note: Certain participants' name has been changed to preserve their anonymity.
Source: Fieldwork data 2018

Upon interviews conduction further findings have been obtained which demonstrated that when researching vulnerable groups of people on the move and collecting data about different aspects of irregularity, it is possible these observations to suggest additional courses of action in order to obtain expert knowledge (Fedyuk & Zentai 2018:172).

It is worthwhile noting that the interview manifests a key method which enhances the qualitative comprehension in different types of research and seeks for a thorough epistemological, critical observation of its purpose, strengths, challenges, and limitations. Especially, in the migration research context, interviews play a pivotal role when researching vulnerable groups of people on the move and collecting data regarding aspects of irregularity, autonomy, trafficking smuggling and agency of mobile people. Moreover, the interview should be carefully adapted to each data collection process and to assimilate a reflection on each role of the participant and accompany power dynamics. Interview forms such as life experience stories, semi-structured or unstructured empower the respondent to actively shape the research inquiry and for the researcher to map out the "hidden" and "unexplored" areas as part of the inquiry (Feyduk & Zentai 2018: 172).

Overall, the data collection process completed successfully, respecting the data protection principles. It should be noted that the use of recording technologies during the interviews was highly approved by all participants. As aforementioned regarding the targeted age group of interviewers, one limitation of the research was the small number of women participants. In fact, this can be explained due to the limited number of single women that cross the challenging Mediterranean borders, compared to large numbers of men who attempt making this migration journey.

CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUALIZING BORDERS³

1.1 Background of the EU migration crisis

In 2015, Europe witnessed the largest refugee crisis since the end of World War II, as an increasing number of migrants and refugees from the Middle Eastern countries had been fleeing into Europe amidst the escalating crisis in Syria. The so-called “European migration crisis” is estimated that forced more than a million⁴ refugees and migrants to cross the Mediterranean Sea seeking safety, stability and better living conditions in Europe.

The existent theory of push and pull framework is determined migrants and refugees’ motivation in fleeing from their countries of origin. Migration mobility is shaped by four types of factors: (a) factors associated with the origin country, (b) factors associated with the destination country, (c) intervening the obstacles, and (c) personal reasons. In both cases of countries of origin and destination, these factors may be acting in order to hold, keep people engaged, or attract them (pull factors) or factors which repel people (push factors). Certainly, factors may vary for each individual, whose subsequent mobility decisiveness will be shaped by a different perception, situation, and experience of factors (EASO 2016). Poverty, conflict, a threat of violence, a generalized lack of security and unemployment are the central determinants of forced population movements.

In this sense, motivations considered not to be fixed, but are instead dynamic and are constantly shaping as the migrant and refugee population is exposed to new surroundings and ways of life. Similarly, in the context of conceptualizing borders, dynamism, and fluidity, as Delanty (2006:186) refers to the border is not a fixed line rather than a fluid process. As social, political, and economic instability cause migration flows, so the persecution of the migrant

³ In terms of research, a conceptual framework is provided in order to understand a migration-related conflict. This framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the migration crisis and borders' controls, as it gives space to criticise these controls in practice. Thus, the term conceptualizing offers a "soft interpretation of intentions" and certainly assists to identify meanings (Zapata-Barrero 2018: 85-86).

⁴ Cumulative total as of 01/01/2015 until 20/01/2019 is 1,120,702 arrivals to Greece. Available at: <http://migration.iom.int/europe?type=arrivals> [Accessed 27 January 2019].

population creates greater threats to their personal security, which leads them to traverse more dangerous and uncertain migration routes. Even though they experience a high risk of death while attempting border crossing, they are willing to risk their lives and their children live for the sake of a better future. As far as pull factors are concerned, first and foremost is the safety, following the availability of employment opportunities in destination countries, proxied by economic development or the perceived difference in job opportunities between a country of origin and destination. The latter has been identified as a pivotal macro-micro-level factor in shaping migration decisions (EASO 2016).

As Menal said *“One of the main reasons to flee from our country and come to a European one was the job opportunities and the seeking of potential economic stability. We had to go through Greece, as it is the first European country and acts as a transit point for me and my daughter, in order to reach Germany where my husband lives since 2016. The legal documents needed to travel to Germany could not be prepared in Syria, and they have not been prepared in Greece either till now. My husband has already found a job in a shoe factory and is waiting for us. Thanks to technology and smartphones we are able to communicate and share our news about the legal reunification procedures. After all these difficulties that we went through, I desperately want my family to be united and live in safety and dignity”*.

Another single-parent family highlighted the importance of technology and digital networks as a pull factor in shaping migration aspirations. *“As we were trying to escape from Syria, some of our relatives had already reached Germany, after crossing Turkish and Greek borders and stranded for a couple of months in Greece, we finally arrived at their aspired destination country”*. - Fatma

To illustrate the above, it is obvious that the migrant population rely on different types of networks, as a guide for the initial planning stage or during their journey. Sometimes decisions about their destination are made *ad hoc* along the way, while other times are based on opportunities and variables which arise on the journey or are communicated to them by agents and smugglers. Certain migration scholars affirmed that access to information regarding the living standards in the destination country, via formal and informal digital networks, could facilitate the communication brought by technological developments to migrant and refugee

population, which undoubtedly is instrumental in shaping individual aspirations (EASO 2016). Up to a point, relatives and friends' networks seem to influence destination country. In many cases, migration mobility is increasingly becoming smoother by the use of digital networks, which has a tremendous role in the timing and conditions of individual movement (Cummings et al. 2015).

In the research, 8 out of 10 interviewees tried to cross the borders towards more dangerous routes and relied on the hands of criminal smuggling networks. *“It is impossible to make it without the guidance of the smugglers. They are everywhere, at every border, and they know exactly the followed routes in order to allow us entry to the European countries, as most of us crossed the borders irregularly”- Mahmud.* The role of human smuggling networks appears to be significant, while is also being recognized in relation to refugees and asylum-seekers movements to Europe. Since the outset of the European refugee crisis, smugglers have become a necessary part of the migration journey across borders, whereas they provide the sole way for asylum seekers and refugees to escape from persecution and find protection in a safer place (Koser 2010).

Figure 1: Migrants walk during a rainstorm near Feres town in northern Greece after crossing



Evros river, on the Greek-Turkish borders on 10 January 2019.

Source: Giorgos Moutafis, available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/giorgos.moutafis.5/posts/10218235290335142> (accessed 10 January 2019).

1.2 Influx of refugees and migrants in Greece

Since 2015, Greece has been receiving thousands of migrants and asylum-seekers fleeing war and deprivation and seeking safety in Europe. Along the Eastern Mediterranean route, Greece presents itself more as a transit point and not as a destination for the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers, due to the fact that has both land and sea entry points in a European country. According to data from the National Coordination Centre for Border, Immigration and Asylum (NCCBIA)⁵, 23,996 third-country nationals arrived illegally from January to September 2018 through the Greek-Turkish sea border, compared to 19,799 for the same period in 2017. The irregular inflows during January-September 2018 from the Greek-Turkish land border amounted to 12,290, compared to 3,744 for the same period in 2017.

Table 3: Mediterranean migrant arrivals

Arrivals by sea					
Country	01 Jan- 31 Dec 2014	01 Jan- 31 Dec 2015	01 Jan- 31 Dec 2016	01 Jan- 31 Dec 2017	01 Jan- 9 Dec 2018
Greece	34,442	853,650	173,614	29,501	30,384

Source: <https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reach-110833-2018-deaths-reach-2160> (accessed 16 December 2018).

Except for putting numbers into perspective, it is equally important to present the European policy measures in order to securitize its external borders. The EU-Turkey statement adopted on 18 March 2016, commonly known as the EU-Turkey deal, was aiming at deterring migrants and refugees from arriving in Europe. The European Council and Turkey reached an agreement with the purpose of stopping the flow of irregular migration via Turkey to Europe.

⁵ Data retrieved from http://www.mopocp.gov.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&perform=view&id=6413&Itemid=664&lang=EN and http://www.mindigital.gr/images/prosfygiko/images/183866_prosfigiko_deltio4_en_v3.pdf [Accessed 16 December 2018].

Based on the Statement, all new irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving from Turkey to the Greek islands and whose applications for asylum have been declared inadmissible should be returned to Turkey (European Council 2016). Following the EU-Turkey deal, most of the Balkan countries sealed their borders without providing humanitarian assistance, protection, and resettlement to migrant and refugee people that are travelling under a fragile situation across hard and closed borders.

At this point, it is interesting to mention that when interviewees were asked whether they are aware of the European policies and agreements signed, as well as about new legal restrictions and measures, few responded that they follow-up with the latest political developments related to migration issues; despite the fact that any update may directly affect them. One should presume that these people should be the first to concern, nevertheless, they might feel frustrated and in a vulnerable position of being unable to act, since they are stranded in such harsh living conditions.

Additionally, to be noted that a geographical restriction⁶ imposed on refugees and migrants who arrived in Greece after the EU-Turkey Statement on the Greek islands until their asylum requests to be examined. In examining this issue, one sees that the policy of detaining refugees and asylum seekers on the islands, in order to implement the EU-Turkey agreement, signals that thousands of people have been trapped for months in desperate humane conditions. They are cast into a legal and moral grey zone, shattered by the prospect of returning to a country which is not safe for them. Unfortunately, all these measures have led to a fortress Europe and have increased the number of deaths at borders.

⁶ The geographical restriction on the Eastern Aegean islands, available at <https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/access-and-forms-reception-conditions/freedom-movement> (accessed 20 December 2018).



Figure 2: Evros river during difficult winter conditions amidst freezing temperatures at 12 January 2019.

Source: Giorgos Moutafis, available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/giorgos.moutafis.5/posts/10218249782617440> (accessed 12 January 2019).

The Mediterranean Sea has become the pathway to four main migration routes commonly used by refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers to cross irregularly into Europe. In this research, all respondents came to Greece via the Eastern Mediterranean route (EMR) which refers to the land crossing through Evros river and sea crossing from Turkey to Greece. One of the interviewees claimed: *"The journey via Turkey was the most difficult thing I have ever done so far in my life. We had been walking continuously for four days until we reached the Greek-Turkish border. In the morning we stayed in one place, while during nights we had to cross lots of kilometers so that the authorities did not suspect us. Finally, I crossed the Aegean Sea with the help of some other refugees from the group and with the aid of smugglers. Without smugglers crossing the borders is impossible"*- Ahmed

Western Balkan route (WBR) has been the tightest with intensified border controls. This reason simply drives migrant and refugee population to cross the borders illegally and demand services from the smugglers to facilitate access into European countries. Central Mediterranean route (CMR) has become the most-used route to the EU in recent years and has been characterized as the deadliest one⁷. It refers to the sea journey from North Africa (particularly

⁷ The CMR has accounted for almost 88% of all recorded deaths along the Mediterranean since 2014, while only accounting for 25% of arrivals. Additionally, CMR has claimed an estimated 10,311 lives between 2015 and December 2017. Comparisons between the first two months of 2017 and 2018 may show that arrivals to Italy and

Libya) to Italy. People embark on dangerous journeys departing from North Africa which is considered to be the major transit point to cross the Mediterranean Sea and reach Europe. The initial plan of the migrant population arriving in Europe via CMR had not been to enter a European country, but the conditions in countries along route motivated or forced them to cross. Unfortunately, most of them witnessed that have experienced more than once violence, sexual exploitation, and torture by state authorities, while attempting to cross borders irregularly and abandoned in the desert (UNHCR 2018). The Western Mediterranean route (WMR) refers to the sea crossing from Morocco to mainland Spain and land crossings to the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla. As of mid-August 2018, WMR has become the most active route of irregular to Europe, when the CMR became highly risky and difficult to reach Europe (Brenner et al. 2018).

1.3 Fortress Europe

During the last years, numerous interdisciplinary studies have shed light on how territorial border controls which are occurred in the spatial dimension of Europe's borders have been changed. The EU Member States continue to reinforce their borders in a way through constantly building walls, fences and monitoring migrants' movements by developing biometric and electronic control systems, in an attempt to better govern migration movements. Yet, in his thorough analysis, Cuttitta (2015) was able to show that state borders are transformed from fixed to flexible borders; in a more metaphorical sense borders can be turned from visible to invisible. Both territorial and non-territorial borders, from a spatial point of view, are mobile and vague. Territorial borders can be stretched within the territory of the country of origin, destination and transit country, as well as in international waters. In other words, they can constitute a spatial change of the border *per se*. Similarly, non-territorial borders also characterized as mobile, since all migrants and refugees carry with them the borders and limitations of their personal stories during the border crossing. To put it in another way, migrant population make it either easier, or difficult or impossible to cross territorial borders, the hard-emotional borders of their own stories

deaths dropped from 13,446 in 2017 to 5,247 in 2018; and from 442 to 316, respectively, the rate of death along the CMR has actually increased. By February 2017, for every 30 people who arrived in Italy, 1 person had died; while at the same time this year, for every 16 people who arrived, 1 person had lost their lives in the Mediterranean. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/The-CMR-The-deadliest-migration-route.pdf> [Accessed 29 September 2018].

could be restricted, and thus create a separate space giving a new perception of the borders as mobile.

On the other hand, the term of “Fortress Europe” refers to the securitization of Europe’s external borders and is a *par excellence* example of the conceptualization of the idea of the “enemy from outside”⁸ (Voutira 2013: 60). The foundations of “Fortress Europe” go back to the Schengen Agreement in 1985, that while establishing freedom of movement within EU borders, demanded more control of its external borders, as migration was foreseen as an increasing threat (Benedicto & Brunet 2018). The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) plays an important role in this whole process of fortress expansion and also acts and establishes coordination with third countries by its joint operation Coordination Points. Frontex continues to support the Member States through joint operations across the main migratory routes in the Eastern, Central and Western Mediterranean and the Western Balkans, by increasing the deployment of border guard officers and other staff (European Commission 2018).

The EU’s new border control programmes not only represent a novel technological upgrade, but they also show that the EU is unable to deal with migration and refugees increasing flows. This can hardly be resolved by labeling migration as a novel threat and using military surveillance technology to seal borders (Hayes & Vermeulen 2012). As a consequence, the existed practices demonstrate that migratory borders are extremely marginal and stretched leading to the death of hundreds of refugees and migrants for the last four years. To give an illustration of what it is meant, a brief look at the Missing Migrants Project is required, managed by International Organization for Migration (IOM) and keeps tracks of the death of migrants and those who have gone missing along migratory routes across countries. Since 2014, the CMR is considered to be the deadliest migration route in the world, with more than 14,500 deaths recorded in this area⁹. It can be seen in table 4 the numbers of how many fatalities have been recorded since 2014 in the CMR.

Table 4: Average number of fatalities per incident recorded in the Central Mediterranean

⁸ Using the word “enemy” is referring to the term of illegal migrants crossing the borders.

⁹ During the first seven months of 2017, 2,224 migrant fatalities were recorded by IOM in the Central Mediterranean which was the highest estimated ratio to have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean en route to Europe up to then. Available at: <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/sites/default/files/c-med-fatalities-briefing-july-2017.pdf> [Accessed 20 December 2018].

January-July, 2014-2017

	Incidents recorded	Total migrant fatalities recorded	Average number of fatalities per incident
2014	32	1,542	48.19
2015	32	1,970	61.56
2016	54	2,692	49.85
2017	127	2,224	17.51

Source: IOM's Missing Migrants Project, 2017, available at <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/sites/default/files/c-med-fatalities-briefing-july-2017.pdf> (accessed 20 December 2018).

In addition to the aforementioned data tracking tool, the European network UNITED for Intercultural Action has been monitoring the deadly results of the building of “Fortress Europe” by collecting data of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers (from newspapers and other organizations since 1993) who have lost their lives in the attempt of entering the “Fortress” or as a result of Europe's immigration policies¹⁰. According to the UNITED network, by 2015, nearly 18,000 people deaths have been documented (Lambert & Clochard 2015: 127).

¹⁰ UNITED for Intercultural Action is the European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants, refugees and minorities. Together with over 560 supporter organizations all around Europe, ranging from local grassroots associations to national and international NGOs, UNITED coordinates campaigns, organizes conferences, takes part in projects, produces publications and undertakes advocacy work to protest against discrimination and promote our shared vision for a diverse and inclusive society. Available at: <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/about-united/> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNITED_for_Intercultural_Action

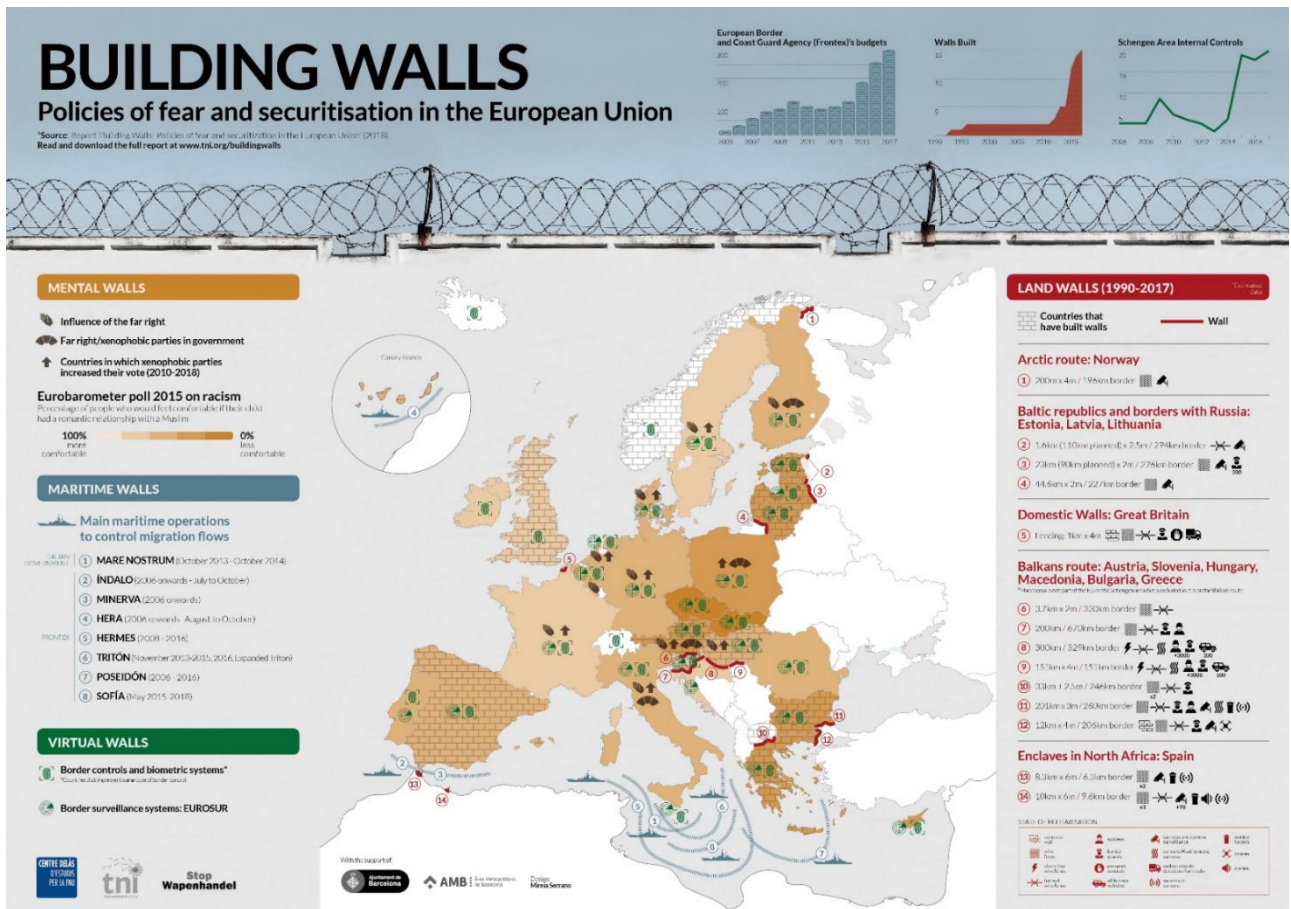


Figure 3: Building walls infographic

Source: Transnational Institute (TNI), available at: <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/building-walls> (accessed 15 December 2018).

The development of European hard policies shows that EU borders are modified at the mercy its needs. The above infographic illustrates the walls of fear and xenophobia built up by the member states of the European Union whose policies lead to strengthening control, surveillance, and militarism.

Above all, it seems that migration unfortunate stories of violence, persecution, and conflict can be found elsewhere, the consequences of Europe's hard policies are totally evident on migration since the Schengen agreement in 1985. Throughout years, European approach has focused mainly on fortifying borders, developing ever more sophisticated surveillance systems, tracking of people's movements, increasing push-backs on sea borders, as well as deportations on

land, and providing fewer legal residency options, despite the great need for legal documentation, respect to the right to equality, personal security, and freedom from torture and discrimination (Akkerman 2018).

CHAPTER 2

The Role of Digital Technologies in Migration

2.1 Conceptualization of digital network society

The term of network society was initially introduced by Manuel Castells in 1996 in his first volume "The rise of Network Society" in the monographic paper, "The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture" and it describes the role of Information Communication Technology in the contemporary world. Castells argues that digital networks are a complex of dynamic and open structures which can totally transform modern societies into more powerful social, political and economic instruments by creating new forms of identities solely implemented by ICT (Castells 2010). Within the migration context, as the border can become flexible, reticular, and non-spatial formatted, so the dynamic nature of digital network society can make networks adaptable, survivable and pliable. The dynamic binary of openness/closure and inclusion/exclusion of boundaries could be easily expressed in this digital network society.

2.2 Connection between network society and migrants

The "connected migrant" (Diminescu 2008) has become a central figure in popular communication means, maintaining relation through ICT, emphasizing the sociality of the route and sharing information by media networks (Sanchez-Querubin & Rogers 2018: 2). While migrants being separated from their families and uprooted from their countries of origin, the digital networks signal a clear shift towards a connective presence in their diasporic settings. To this end, the migrant population on the move develops networks in order to enhance communication with the origin – transit – aspired countries (Leurs & Ponzanesi 2018: 5). This intensified development of digital networks, driven also by the rapid increase in smartphones with reasonable prices and network services, refugees and migrants are able to use mobiles and internet services in planning their routes, finding new border routes and coordinating with others. ICT facilitates the displaced population migrating into Europe, providing them with highly complex information needs for the journey and destination country. Information needs could be the problems of where to seek accurate information, factors of trust, factors of poor and false

information which severely can cause death at the borders, loss of family and relatives or financial ruin (Borkert et al. 2018:2).

As one interviewee put it: *“In terms of information sharing, I receive daily updates from my husband who lives in Germany about the living conditions there, as well as valuable instructions how to get there as safest as possible.” – Fatma*

An interesting finding of this study was that refugees and migrants are using daily their mobile phones, in order to contact with their relatives in their destination countries, as well as to connect with the ones in their country of origin. This is demonstrating the widespread use of mobile phones and access to the internet among the migrant population. Thus, this analysis is concluded that digital networks not only promote the daily communication and familiarity within the diasporic communities but also reinforce and maintain these relationships. These relationships acquire a new dimension and are transformed into digital ones, where new forms of intimacies are created. To illustrate this point, Borkert et al. (2018) argue that virtual communication encourages a new sense of belonging and constructs common experiences and social identities. On a final note, Witterborn (2015) claims new technologies allow the mobile population to enhance their sociality and build up social media networks.

2.3 New technologies and permeable borders

New technologies such as smartphones, social media, geo-reference systems, SMS, enable the migrant population to share, access and produce useful information during their journeys across borders. They are becoming a sort of lifeline for mobile people. It is of great importance to maintain and enrich digital infrastructure and social media of the route as this is mean that European borders can be modified in a sense by ICTs, while migrants cross them, borders can also be shaped and formulated differently. Thanks to the smartphones, the connective border routes emphasize the sociality of the route and information sharing partially empowered by the media use (Gillespie et al. 2016). On an additional note, the integration of digital infrastructures and technology-mediated services to migrants’ life strengthen human infrastructure as well. In other words, digital platforms and devices are proved as highly important for all those involved in the European refugee crisis.

As Castells (2015) in “Networks of outrage and hope” states that internet and ICT not only centralize our communicational routines but also liberates individuals to shape a new autonomy, reclaim power and shake the political scene, leading to social change; in migration studies, many scholars claim that this is not feasible. Networks can indeed create hopes and opportunities, but they can also turn out as risky, unreliable and inefficient. Furthermore, the emergence of digital infrastructure creates opportunities for migrants and refugees to reach and link to Europe not only physically but also virtually. Thus, digital Europe becomes not just a metaphor for symbolizing virtual inclusion and virtual communities but applies to the reality and materiality of many people. Regardless of how permeable and fluctuated European borders are, Castells (1996) argues that they are replaced by digital networks and flows in line with new forms of restrictions and divisions. The use of media technologies at the border crossings in Europe demonstrates also that the internet is a place of political struggle over discrimination and inequality (Ponzanesi & Leurs 2014).

In this sense, internet and digital media come as an alternative to facilitate the migrant vulnerable people's need to communicate, connect to social networks and seek for better prospects, but in fact, ICT creates new forms of surveillance, monitoring and bordering to Europe. “Fortress Europe” evolves into an exceedingly virtualized perception, which is balancing between a project of expansion and inclusion and digital and physical re-building of its borders (Ponzanesi & Leurs 2014). Lastly, this study outlines that digital networks can shape the boundaries and enhance communication among refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, but concurrently the digital communication is proved to be risky during their navigation across the hard and close borders of "fortress Europe". To this end, this research has revealed a contradictory result that the real and hard EU borders are transformed into hard virtual ones making it impossible for borders to become invisible.

CHAPTER 3

Analysis of case studies and research findings

3.1 Smartphone travelling

The fact that refugees and migrants travelling having in their possession smartphones and access to the internet has become a pivotal part of their life. The use of smartphones offers concrete ways to make border crossing more efficient and sometimes less dangerous. Thanks to mobile phones migrant population can perform tasks in an efficient and quick way. Significant use of smartphones is the geographical direction which they receive through google maps or other GPS devices.

Up to date, mobile phones and smartphones have a significant impact on the experiences of travelers. Friends and family are kept up to date with travel information through Facebook and text messages and photos from the journeys are uploaded. Next, to their social functions, smartphones can also fulfill a symbolic function, as they might give travelers the feeling that they can always call for help when needed and make them feel safer (Liempt & Zijlstra 2017). Nevertheless, this comes to a contradiction based on research results, where not all refugees and migrants were able to use effectively smartphones during their journey: *“the Internet had not helped me at all in my attempt to arrive at Greece through Turkish borders. After my arrival at the Greek island of Lesbos, I was informed about the Viber and WhatsApp, before that I was unaware of the social media applications” – Laith*

When undertaking irregular journeys, migrants often rely on non-institutional sources of information, such as that provided through smugglers. Smugglers usually have detailed knowledge about asylum policies in the areas in which they operate, as they are responsive to the opening and closing of border crossings and know for which countries visas are required and with which countries readmission agreements have been signed (Liempt & Zijlstra 2017). Across Facebook groups and pages, refugees and migrants can check the reliability and reputation of certain smugglers and share information on who is best to contact. Social media and digital technology can assist migrants in making more informed decisions on whom to trust. Smugglers

who succeed in delivering their people to the aspired destination will be considered more reliable and will, therefore, be more successful in obtaining new "clients" through the social network of former ones (Liempt & Zijlstra 2017).

The personal experience of Faruk reinforces the above argument: "Facebook and WhatsApp application were really helpful because it provided me information about routes and smuggling networks".

Figure 4: Voices of Refugees



Social media, mobile devices, and similar digitally networked technologies comprise this infrastructure of “digital passages” sociotechnical spaces of flows in which refugees, smugglers, governments, and corporations interact with each other. Refugees and migrants rely on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype, Viber and Google Maps, to get information on routes and aspired countries of in order to foster contact with smugglers or to reach out to others when in distress. Moreover, media can form a kind of underground communication networks so as illegal migrants to share information. Digital infrastructure has drastically altered the nature of migrants’ networks and undoubtedly made it easier for aspiring refugees and migrants to

make the journey.

Source: BBC Research report (July 2016), available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/publications-and-resources/research/reports/voices-of-refugees> (accessed 15 September 2018).

Concurrently, ICT used for migrants’ movements can be leveraged for surveillance and control. European border policies, in particular, impose digital controls over migrants’ movements (Latonero & Kift 2018).

Furthermore, as ICT and social media became a key characteristic of mixed migration flows to Europe in 2015 and 2016, an analysis of the impact of digital networks on the refugee experience must also consider the material conditions of which is so often characterized as purely informational. Indeed, accessing crucial information on the Internet depends on an entire infrastructure and economy of Wi-Fi hotspots, shops that sell SIM cards, or the physical offices of wire transfer services (Frouws et al. 2016).

3.2 Surveillance and appropriation en route

Borders in the EU context are being challenged by global processes; former borders disappear while new ones have come into existence and take on new function and importance through the emerging digital technology (Delanty 2006: 183). Yet, some paradoxes still exist about border concepts and border crossings considered as illegal acts of violation and invasion up to date. Despite the wide acceptance that with the entry of new technologies, internet, and globalization, borders should become more permeable (Leontidou 2004); concurrently, border controls, surveillance, and securitization have risen in the European Union.

The growing numbers of “virtual walls” which seek to control, monitor and surveil people’s movements confirm the concept of “Fortress Europe”. This has resulted in the expansion, especially since 2013, of various programs to restrict people’s movement and collect biometric data. The collected data of these systems are stored in the EURODAC database, which allows analysis to establish guidelines and patterns on migrants’ movements. From 2011, Eurosur, a coordinated surveillance system which relies on innovative technology to militarize the external borders of the EU and thus limit the number of “illegal” immigrants from entering to Europe (Lambert & Clochard 2015).

The study results present that since refugees have understood the significance of social media and digital networks in general, they made daily use of them, trying to keep in touch with relatives and friends. ICT is indeed a crucial aspect of their cross-border journey; however, this experience was not very common among the participants. The majority of the interviewees did not have the mobile phones in their possession while were crossing the borders – and sometimes even after crossing. Mahmud and Hakan provide examples of this: *"I do not know how many borders we crossed and how many routes we changed. The only thing I was worried about was*

internet connectivity. But along the route, smugglers had not allowed us to use mobile phones or any internet. Smugglers took our phones and threw them at seas, rivers etc. They also told us that it would be safer without cell phones in order not to be found by the police authorities".

The development of highly sophisticated technologies used at the border against border crossers might have similarities with the Foucauldian conceptualization of the "Panopticon". In the panopticon, the occupants are constantly aware of the threat of being watched, but the state surveillance on the internet is invisible. To this end, the state-of-the-art surveillance practices used by FRONTEX include cameras, high definition scanning machines, and video monitoring, which become means for surveillance and control (Voutira 2013: 61). Member states want to introduce the so-called "smart borders" to achieve total control over all cross-border movements (Hayes & Vermeulen 2012).

Thus, the respondents reported that through this kind of surveillance their social media use has been restricted, as the quote of Fatima indicates: *"By the time we arrived at Turkey and then walking to reach Evros river at the Greek borders, any communication with my husband cut off because smugglers warned us to stop making calls or sending messages, as social media were suspected surveillance by Frontex"*. During the border crossing, the use of smartphones becomes a window to extortion and abuse by human traffickers, police officers and state authorities (Newell et al. 2016).

This argument is also assured by the fact that refugees found themselves hopeless, without the aid of the smartphones, in order to call for help in urgent situations. The research concludes that there are refugee's experiences of violence that creates appropriation and put them in a highly vulnerable situation (Akkerman 2018). An additional finding has been noted related to government surveillance, the smugglers' restriction as well as the self-restriction (Dekker et al. 2018). However, simultaneously sensitive and vulnerable borders are constructed through the ICT and harden the communication of migrant population; this change also the concept of open/soft borders as the meaning of flexible/permeable borders is abolished. In this sense, digital media are transforming into a means of control and surveillance media.

As Bedoya (Latonero & Kift 2014) points out, "the survival of our most vulnerable communities has often turned on their ability to avoid detection." It is important to interrogate,

then, whether networks serve to proactively connect and aid refugees or whether they instead make them dangerously accessible to harmful systems, policies, or individuals. The data collection regarding borders' experiences which might secure refugees a new life abroad, they also leave them newly vulnerable to the prejudices that may limit their future perspectives. As Latonero and Kift (2018) claim this phenomenon is quite critical when refugee populations themselves become aware of the potential negative impact of data-emitting digital infrastructures.

3.3 The question of control

As concluded in the aforementioned findings, surveillance and appropriation create sensitive and vulnerable borders which may lead to migrant's disorientation. In spite of Castell's view (2012) that "the Internet use empowers people by increasing their feelings of security, personal freedom and influence and these feelings have a positive effect on personal well-being. The culture of freedom, enabled by the Internet, will allow individuals to change the mindset and thus the social structure within the community", in this migration context. Thus, the constant fear of losing everything they had already achieved and possessed up to that time is created.

ICT and digital practices may facilitate border crossing, possible integration, empowerment and information needs, but the same practices raise virtual and real "walls" making refugees vulnerable to state control and surveillance. These virtual "walls" prevent from making territorial borders invisible and at the same time raise the question of control for refugee and migrant population who crossing Mediterranean borders. The question of borders affects the construction of European identity and continues to have implications on openness and closure issue in many aspects of peoples' lives, as borders do matter since they are considered to be points of inclusion and exclusion – and they either fixed or in constant change (Leontidou 2001: 10).

The fortification of Europe is creating an increasingly hostile world for people fleeing from war and political prosecution. European policies from a more social agenda to one focused on security, in which migrations and the movements of people are considered as threats to state security. Digital traces which refugees leave across the routes leave them vulnerable to state control and to intimidation of powerful governmental agencies. As a consequence, they are

approached with traditional security tools: militarism, control, and surveillance (Benedicto and Brunet 2018). In a pre-digital era, refugees and migrants did not rely on technology and smartphones, as human mobility was organized with different ways betwixt and between spaces. In a digital era, ICT and the use of smartphones has proved to pertain painful experiences in mobility of refugees and migrants, since their only means of communication along their migratory journey is taken or detached by smugglers. Therefore, a question of control is emerging, where digital frontiers have drastically changed the way borders are reconfigured and the way digital communication networks have been created and sustained among migrant population, especially during their border crossing.

The results of case studies reveal a policy of EU interaction within the Mediterranean region which has become obsessed with migration controls regardless of the cost of each migrants' life. In this sense, by reinforcing the military and security forces in the Mediterranean borders, repression is increased, as well as the democratic accountability that leads to more and more people being forced from their countries of origin. The more EU reinforces its power on developing stronger, smarter and more effective information systems in order to protect its borders and enhances its internal security, the more vulnerable refugees and migrants will strand in the entry points of Europe, especially Greece and Italy (European Commission 2017). Based on a Foucault's analysis of state and power, borders seem to fit the definition of significant instruments of power, which can be all characterized as merging external and internal control measures (Szary & Giraut 2015). As a consequence, by controlling the means of communication of the migrant population, it is meant that their whole life is under state-controlled communication and surveillance.

On a final note, it should be mentioned that the power to control migration flows is a core aspect of a sovereignty state in order to intimidate and monitor refugees and migrants. Up to date, technology is drastically used through GPS and other location tracking services, smartphones, cameras, and other recording equipment and a variety of other surveillance equipment so as to prevent any contact with family and cut off the information needed for new migration routes seeking for safety, dignity, and freedom.

CONCLUSION

In general, this study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of how digital communication among refugees, migrants and asylum seekers can transform the territorial borders into invisible and permeable. Nevertheless, the results of this research indicate that digital infrastructure is exceeding the dynamics of border openness, as well as the narrative that borders can become “invisible”, and thus provide further evidence that ICT raises the issue of control, and appropriation among digital networks and migrant population. The research findings additionally show that ICT has unquestionably become an essential source of communication and information among the migrant population, however, the digital infrastructure lead to state surveillance.

It is difficult though for researchers to investigate how irregularity in migration processes is influencing the individual narratives and how dealing with these findings in an ethical way. While discussing ethics, it is vital to acknowledge that they are not an ‘after-thought’ or something that only needs to be considered at the moment when the research proposal is evaluated. Ethical issues need to be raised and reflected upon from the conceptualization of the research until the placement of the results in the public arena (Liempt & Bilger 2018: 283).

It should be stressed that the qualitative analysis of this research indicates the contradictions of permeability of borders via ICT use. In this sense, it was found that vulnerable population can be harassed by traffickers, abused and exploited by smugglers along the precarious Mediterranean routes to Europe. In the past, money was stolen from immigrants, as presented in Kazan’s film (*America America* 1963) where vulnerability experiences of immigrants were described; we now see that mobile devices may be confiscated and leave the refugees and migrants suddenly out of touch, isolated and beyond hard borders.

With regards to the research approach, it is more a pilot study which needs to be followed by further research studies in the future; as the extensive use of ICT reveals a new dimension in migration studies. Lastly, digital migration studies are quite an under-research area, mainly with respect to the use of digital infrastructure by refugees and migrants within Europe. These observations have several implications for research into the impact of digital communication

technologies on international migration, and it is foreseen as a fast-growing topic of research (Miller 2011).

APPENDIX

Interview Questions

Mapping of Migration routes – Push and Pull factors

1. What is your country of origin?
2. What was the reason you left your country?
3. What was the price to leave your country?
4. How did you collect information about the trip and your aspired destination?
5. How many members your family consists of, did you separate along the route with your family or did anyone leave behind?
6. What were the reasons that you attracted to Greece?
7. Were there family ties or anything else that brought you to Greece?
8. Could you describe the borders across the migration routes? Did they difficult or easy to cross?
9. Did you know about asylum policy changes during your trip? How did you react to these changes?
10. Why did you choose Turkey and Greece to cross? Did you contract with a person to help you cross the border?
11. Where did you contract with the person to help you cross the border? How much did you agree to pay?
12. During your journey, how many times did you try to cross the border?
13. Now that you have reached Greece, do you have any plans to continue your journey to any other aspired European country? If yes, why?
14. What about the idea of resettling to Greece, rather than relocate to other countries?

ICT – Networks – Social media

15. Was there internet access during the journey, and if so, how often?
16. What kind of social networking applications did/do you use?
17. What was the purpose of using smartphones?

18. How important was the digital communication along the route, or even after crossing the borders?
19. To what extent social media is vital to maintaining family ties?
20. Did you find it dangerous -in terms of safety- to use digital networks, before and after the border crossing?
21. Do you think smartphones were/are a way of surveillance during your journey?
22. Currently residing in Greece, are you aware or follow-up any updates on new EU agreements among member states, regarding legal issues/family reunifications/resettlements. If yes, how you get updates?

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