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Socio-spatial Integration:
a two layered process

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INTRODUCTION

Almost three years have passed since the summer of 2015, when an unprecedented influx of people crossing the borders through mainland routes and the Mediterranean waters into Europe was observed and declared as the 'European Refugee Crisis'. Although, forced displacement and migration, due to violence, wars, economic issues and political reasons is not a new phenomenon, but rather one that has been worldwide present for decades, the current wave of refugees aiming to enter the European continent, allowed for the framing of such a conjuncture as an exceptional one, a 'crisis'. A European Crisis which has been constructed through mainstream media attention, humanitarian calls for aid and public narratives alike.

Greece, specifically, due to its geographical location and as a first country of entry pursuant to the Dublin Regulation (EU Regulation No. 604/2013) has experienced a significant number of migrants and asylum seekers entering its geographical territory. Since August 2012 patterns of arrivals and entry into the European Union have shifted from the Greek-Turkish land borders to the sea borders (UNHCR, 2013), highlighting

the dangerous passage refugees are forced to take; a passage that has been marked by deaths and missing persons. In 2014, arrivals of refugees who have successfully crossed the borders into Greek territory from Turkey were counted to 41.038, while in 2015 the number of arrivals increased up to 856.723 (UNHCR, 2017). And even though, the numbers substantially decreased the following year, Greece being a country of arrival, reception and 'temporary' settlement, has been concerned with the pressing issues of adequate accommodation, and most importantly integration.

Accommodation and integration have been addressed both by state-led responses, through a collaboration of the state and the humanitarian sector, and bottom-up initiatives, organized by volunteers, activist groups and local communities. These responses are underpinned by different practices and ways of realization on the ground, developing distinctive approaches towards integration, however both 'equally' focusing on basic needs and opportunities for economic, social and cultural inclusion.

How, then, are processes of integration implemented and achieved, and what is their relation to the accommodation's location? This article tries to illustrate the ways in which state-led responses have an integral role to play in the construction of the aforementioned processes. The relationship among the geographical location of government-led refugee camps and opportunities for inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers is examined from a critical perspective. It is argued that the location of the camps rather than contributing towards fostering processes of inclusion, reinforces social segregation through state control. Nonetheless, this is realized within the rhetoric of formal integration.

Contrary to the state policies and narratives on refugees' reception and accommodation, I am arguing towards the territorial potentiality of social, economic and cultural inclusion, and therefore on the spatial aspects of integration. I reflect on the concept of integration as it is declared within humanitarian aid interventions and implemented through state migrant policies. In particular, by revisiting the notion of the border, both visible and invisible, I explore the informal processes of integration which materialize within and beyond the territorial and physical boundaries of state-led refugee camps. This work then aims to contribute to an expanding research work on the implementation of refugee policies and bottom-up practices in the Greek context. This is achieved through an empirical study of the ground reality as it becomes more concrete, localized and networked.

This article is based on research conducted between November 2016 and August 2017, through visits in the field and specific refugee settings in the Attica region, that I had access during my employment in an international humanitarian organization operating in Greece. Taking the official Ministerial Decision N. 11.1/6343 of December 2014 as a starting point, I conduct a policy document analysis, trying to unpack institutional elements that underpin the state's response to processes of integration. This analysis is complemented by empirical data collected and informal talks realized in both contexts of state-led refugee sites (Elliniko, Elefsina, Skaramagkas, Rafina, Lavrio) and informal squats (Chora Community Space, Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza, 5o Lyceum School Exarcheia squat), located mainly in central areas of Athens, where many undocumented, 'without papers' refugees reside. Lastly, drawing on observations and through my personal engagement with institutional, humanitarian actors and refugees, what became explicit from the early stages of the research was an apparent disjunction among the institutional procedures, their 'formal' application by governmental and non-governmental humanitarian actors, and the 'informal' processes developing on the ground. This indicated that processes of spatial and social inclusion and integration advance in two, nonetheless distinct layers. However, could it be argued that by departing from the concept of border as a territorial and social boundary and perceiving it as membrane, processes operate in a rather porous manner illustrating a two layered system of integration?

DIALECTICAL APPROACH TO INTEGRATION AND EN-CAMPMENT PRACTICES

What then is considered integration, and how can it be perceived in formal and informal terms? Is integration merely a concept or a process that unfolds in numerous and diverse ways? And being a process what kind of formal or informal passages can be pursued to be achieved?

Integration can be perceived as a concept and a process that asks for the involvement of both the individual and the receiving society. Understood as such, integration is multi-dimensional since it addresses several aspects of the social, economic, cul-

tural and political sphere. There are numerous actions to be performed by several actors, ranging from the state level to non-governmental stakeholders (UNHCR, n.d.), and a constant struggle which relates to the acceptance and recognition of the 'other'. According to the ICRIRR Principles (2002, p. 12):

> "Integration is multi-dimensional in that it relates both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of resettlement as well as to refugees' own perceptions of, acceptance by and membership in the host society."

The above statement clearly illustrates the multi-dimensionality of the process and the need for achieving balance among the demands placed on the refugee and the receiving community. At the same time though, this statement perpetuates the narrative of the asylum seeker, migrant, refugee perceived as a 'guest' and the receiving country as a 'host community'. A narrative which maintains the notion of 'hospitality' as a predominant one in asylum and immigration, and which places the sovereign state in a privileged position, whereas the newcomer in an inferior morally debt position (Herzfeld, 1992). Such a rhetoric underpins the state's response to reception, basic needs provision and accommodation, and highlights the politics of compassion on which humanitarian aid in Greece has been established. It problematizes and defines the role of the state in relation to responsibilities, rights and opportunities granted to refugees and puts in the forefront the notion of inclusion and exclusion essential to integration processes.

However, in accordance to Rozakou's analysis of the 'biopolitics of hospitality' (2012) the aforementioned rhetoric also emphasizes the conceptualization of asylum seekers as guests which "puts them in a space between biological existence and full political and social life. Neither merely 'bare life' nor a full political being, the refugee was produced as the receiver of humanitarian generosity, as having limited agency." (2012, p. 563). This space then is physically materialized in the refugee camp, the state's first response to provision for accommodation and a dominant model of refugee management in humanitarian aid as Malkki (1995) has argued. In migration and camp studies numerous scholars have focused on the relation of biopolitics and humanitarianism (Foucault, 1977, 2003; Agamben, 1994, 1998; Malkki, 1995), stressing the function of the camp both as a site of humanitarian assistance and as a space that control, monitor and supervision upon refugees and asylum seekers are performed (Malkki,

1992; Pandolfi, 2003). Therefore, these geographically bounded spaces can be perceived as territories where technologies of control are attempted. And as Delaney asserts territory is deployed as "a means of controlling 'what is inside' by limiting access or excluding others" (2005, 19). In this sense, "the camps can be described as 'areas of the other', outside the generalized disciplinary order, where the social boundaries are defined, not the different characters of the differences" (Stavrides, 2016, p. 151).

The above emphasize the relationship of power, control and the camp. At the same time, the social and political aspects of life within it and in relation to the receiving community are also addressed. The model of refugee management through encampment practices has also been performed in the Greek context, however, with remarkable differences. This can be scrutinized in several layers from the categorization and the labelling of the encampment sites, to their geographical location and territorial existence. What kind of understandings can be drawn from the spatiality and location of the camp itself; of the site of reception and accommodation in relation to the processes of integration?

FRAMING THE GREEK CONTEXT THROUGH AN EXAMINATION OF STATE-LED POLICIES

In 2011 the European Court of Human Rights and Court of Justice of the EU "found that the Greece's asylum system suffers from 'systemic deficiencies', including lack of reception centres, poor detention conditions, and the lack of an effective remedy." (Papademetriou, 2016). The Greek state's response at that time in order to address the above 'systemic deficiencies' related to asylum processes, adopted Law 3907/2011 which established screening procedures, addressed detention conditions, and devised actions for improving host facilities.

Since the adoption of the above law, several Presidential Decrees and Ministerial Decisions have added to the clarification of legal procedures and amendments of existing ones in order to define the organization and operation of First Reception Services, Asylum Service and establishment and operation of Hospitality Centres for third-country nationals (Δομές Φιλοξενίας υπηκόων τρίτων χωρών). These

host facilities, or otherwise referred to as state-led refugee camps, in the official documents of the Greek state are named by and thus framed within the concept of hospitality (φιλοξενία). Specifically, in December 2014, the regulation of 2012 (MD 7001/2/1454, 2012) was complimented by including guidelines on conditions of hospitality for third-country nationals, integration procedures to the centres, not only duties but also obligations of the centres' staff, and lastly but equally important the establishment and quality of adjacent provided services. It is evident that "hospitality thus emerges as an ideal, an object of regulatory policies as well as both a national and a private affair" (Rozakou, 2012, p. 566).

Within this context of state hospitality and provided services, the integration of 'third-country nationals' is stated, as follows:

"Depending on the category of the persons hosted in the centre, and if possible, social inclusion programs are offered in collaboration with public or private stakeholders. […]

The above mentioned services are oriented towards strengthening of the forces and empowering of the adult members of the guest families, with the prospect of their autonomous integration into the local social and economic life, as well as the empowering of the persons in their efforts to create functional relations among them and in their creative integration in society." (MD 11.1/6343, 2014, Article 15, Para 2,3: 38320).

The services concerned with the basic needs and social aspect of integration include appropriate living space and conditions, catering (food support), health services, psycho-social support, access to education and legal aid, and 24 hours safeguarding and security. Of particular significance are considered provision of Greek language lessons, access to the educational system for the underaged, creative occupation (such as sports, dancing classes and educational trips) and consultation on social networking and professional integration. As many other national and local policies are focused on the main areas of integration, community life, housing, employment, health and education, it is also evident that the Greek national policy in regards to the operation of the centres is also composed around them. Thus, the programs that should be offered in the centres are organized around the "five pillars of integration" (US Amb. Emerson, 2016), those being:

- Linguistic integration
- Integration of school children
- Economic integration
- Provision of a clear path to citizenship
- Civic integration

Through this document, it is also implied that integration as a cultural and social process should be first addressed and achieved within the camps by the support of both public and private actors. Therefore, the corresponding article of the Ministerial Decision of December 2014 declares integration as a significant aspect within the Hospitality Centres and primarily acknowledges social, economic and cultural elements as fundamental for the success of 'autonomous integration' process.

Nonetheless, in the above excerpt there is an opening statement that highly determines if a person is eligible to be considered for any of the provided services, by two implied preconditions.

"Depending on the category of the persons hosted in the centre…"

First, the MD article states that access to services is depended on the category of the persons. Although this article will not dive into an analysis of the categorisation and labelling of refugees (Arendt, 1951, 1996; Malkki, 1995; Zetter, 1991,2007), it is critical to note that the 'bureaucratic labelling process' of the refugee defines and prioritizes needs and therefore access to accommodation and services. The categorization, especially within the legal framework in Greece as well as other European countries, forges distinctions among the refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and therefore strengthens the immaterial borders that a person comes across in their effort towards social and occupational advancement, a vital component of the multi-dimensional process of integration.

This brings us to the latter implied precondition of the excerpt above: 'persons hosted in the centre'. The labelling of the person as a guest and third-country national, straightforwardly excludes from the process people who although legally are asylum seekers or undocumented immigrants, without papers, they are still not accepted to stay into hospitality centres (Rozakou, 2012, p. 568). It is evident, that this 'bureaucratic label' of a third-country national, the person who has been granted asylum and therefore legal permission to stay, settle and work in the country, has also a spatial manifestation on the type of accommodation facility that the person is eligible to stay and might be assigned to.

SPATIAL INTEGRATION PROCESS EXPLORED THROUGH THE 'POLITICS OF INVISIBILITY'

During 2015 and following the revised Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management (MoPOCP, 2013), the establishment of new camps in the Greek islands and mainland was realized. The classification of the camps in regards to their temporary or permanent status, as well as the procedures and services provided, emanates from a legal regulatory framework of the Greek reception and detention system. Within this framework the state's first emergency response was to inaugurate a network of Temporary Accommodation Sites, alternatively named Open Reception Facilities (ORFs) located in the mainland, which complemented the newly established Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) and Transit Sites located in the islands, and Pre-Removal Detention Facilities located both in the islands and mainland[1]. Due to the 'humanitarian aid urgency' and consequently 'state of emergency' that the country declared, the sites operate in a temporary status, particularly prior to the closure of the Greek Border in Macedonia and the EU-Turkey Agreement (20 March 2016). Therefore, the temporality of the officially established sites, except from the unsystematic recording, reporting and monitoring of site profiles, signified their non-classification as Hospitality Centres (Δομές Φιλοξενίας), and consequently their operation not legally subject to the MD of December 2014 (General Regulations on the operation of Hospitality Centres). This allowed for diverse interpretations of integration policy and as a result the formulation of different integration processes, both formal and informal, within the sites.

And contrary to the above aspects of integration, where accessibility to adequate housing, education, legal support, capacity building, employment as a significant factor for self-resilience and livelihood, are considered crucial for establishing social integration and cohesion, the state's response in the selection of the state-led refugee camps' locations conveniently disregarded the factor of spatial proximity to urban centres and therefore accessibility to such services. The camps where located in the periphery of urban and rural areas, with inadequate or even non-existent public transportation services towards the urban centres, isolated from the social life of the local community. In addition, the state-led refugee camps operated, whereas some still operate, in abandoned military bases and public facilities, derelict factories and deserted

municipal or ministerial summer camps (Christodoulou et al, 2016; Karyotis, 2016; Simit, 2016; Tsavdaroglou, 2018).

For instance, Elefsina site, which was shut down due to inadequate and dangerous living conditions and reopened on the grounds of reached maximum capacity of other refugee camps, is located in a Greek's Navy abandoned warehouse building, Skaramangkas site at Greek's Navy territory next to the commercial and transport port of Attica, a highly environmentally polluted and industrial area, Rafina and Lavrio sites located in deserted summer camps in forest areas with lacking fire safety infrastructure, and the Elliniko sites were located at Athens' old airport, specifically the Arrivals building and Hockey and Baseball fields, remains of the vast legacy of relinquished Athens Olympics 2004 facilities. In the following figure the location of the state-run refugee camps in relation to their geographical proximity to rural and urban areas is illustrated in the Greek country region (Fig.1).
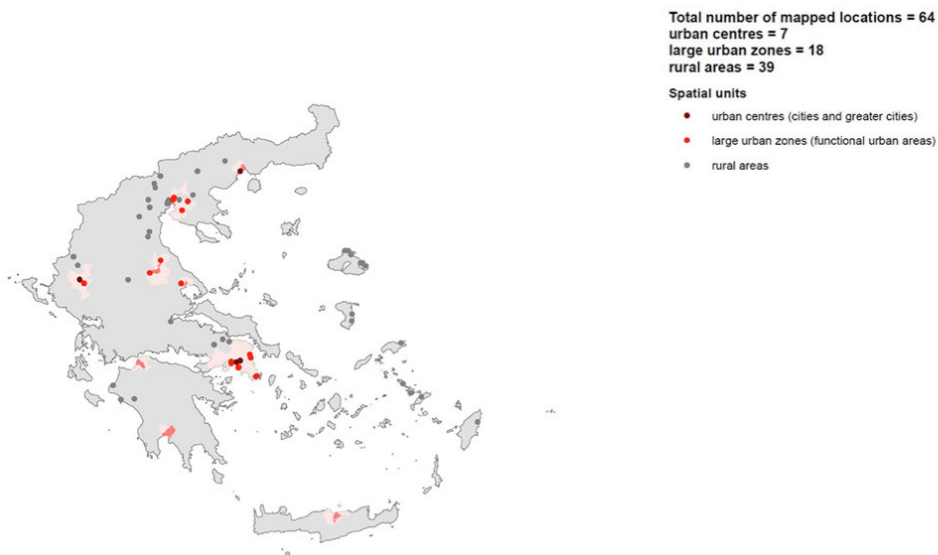

Figure 1. Temporary Accommodation Sites in Greece, 2017. Geographical location and proximity to urban/rural areas. Data gathering: A. Paraskevopoulou, visualiztation: F. Palaiologou, 2017. Source: refugeespaces.org

And while the state sets the ground base for the sites location and management, the site management support and therefore services provided, are executed by other actors, mainly iNGOs and local NGOs operating on the ground (i.e. Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, Oxfam, International Organization for Migration, et al.). It is asked from the external non-governmental actors to address the gaps in services and processes that state actors allowed through loopholes. Thus, the aforementioned integration services are offered by iNGOs, local NGOs and volunteering organizations (i.e. Hellenic Red Cross, SolidarityNow, Praksis, Metadrasi, Brirish Council, Greek Council for Refugees, et al.), that have either the authority of the site, or are present periodically on site and provide supporting activities, such as health care, protection, legal aid services, children activities and informal education. However, access even to these supporting services is limited, depending on availability of staff, existing facilities and allocated funding. The formal processes of integration within the territorial boundaries of the camp are rendered insufficient to address and accommodate the refugees' needs and enhance inclusion to the local community.

Not only then the geographical location and internal operations of the state-led refugee camps are such that reinforce segregation, but also their actual materiality is such that promotes state's control on the 'subjects' and social exclusion. This is achieved by building up territories of the 'other' (Delaney, 2005; Stavrides, 2016) through technologies of imprisonment, such as border fencing (Fig. 2) and entrance access points (Fig. 3, 4). The above examples merely represent the inadequacy of state housing policies, but most importantly depict the spatial manifestation of 'invisibility', 'exclusion' and 'seclusion' of refugees in the urban / rural fabric and as a result in public and social life. Therefore, it becomes apparent that the spatial aspect of integration is neglected, while the 'politics of invisibility' (Rozakou, 2012) are embodied and reproduced through material boundaries and territorial exclusion.

Figure 2. Skaramangkas Refugee Site border fencing. A. Paraskevopoulou, 2017.
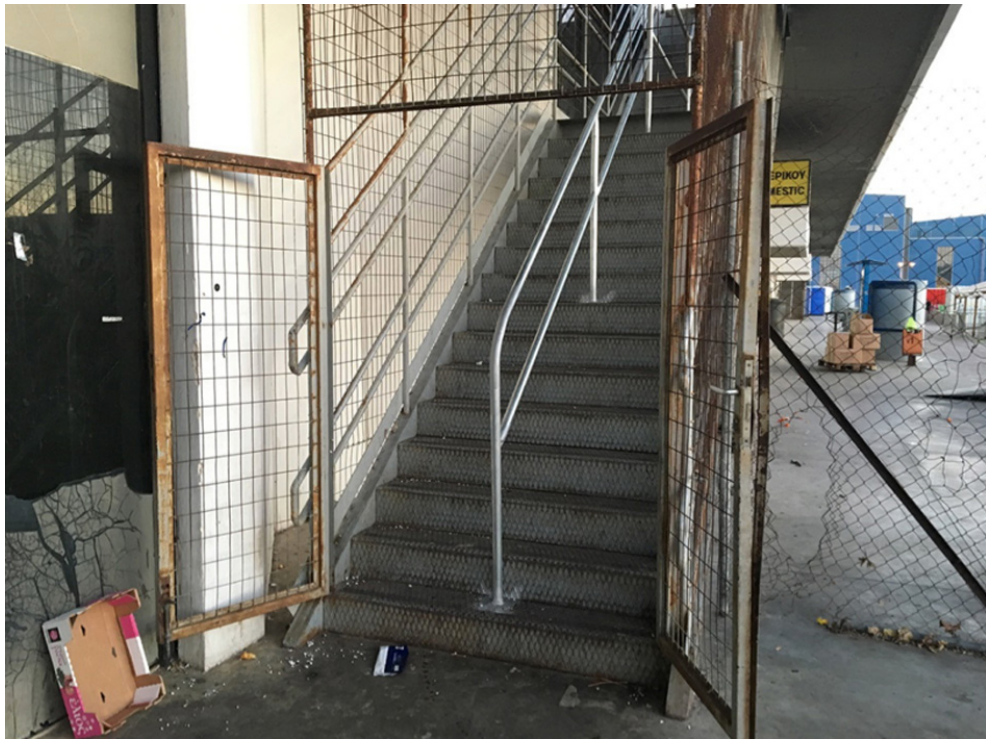
Figure 3. Elliniko Arrivals Refugee Site entrance access point. A. Paraskevopoulou, 2016.

Figure 4. Skaramangkas Refugee Site entrance access point. A. Paraskevopoulou, 2017.

TOWARDS SOCIO-SPATIAL INTEGRATION:
A TWO LAYERED PROCESS

Moreover, as presented above the social factors of refugees' integration concerned with capacity building, community life, livelihoods and self-resilience are inconsistently and insufficiently provided within the remote territories of the state-led camps. For instance, in Elliniko Arrivals site, language courses for children and adults, in both English and Greek languages, were operating on a volunteering basis, children activities were performed on site once a week through the support of a volunteering organization, and informal children's education was provided on a regular basis by the site management support organization. In Skaramagkas, due to the withdrawal of the children's actor on site, access to children protection and activities for a significant period of time was unavailable, while in Elefsina access to regular psychological support was limited due to the incapacity of the official state actor to provide as well translating support. In most of the sites in Attica, access to legal advice and health services is offered on a periodical basis, because of the temporary presence of legal and health actors on site, and through referrals to external agents, most of who are located in Athens' city centre.

This means that residents of the refugee camps will have to travel long distances (in some cases even more than forty kilometres) to reach the urban centre. In order to do such a trip the available transportation offered is through public transport network, that would either be inadequate or unreliable in regards to timetables. In some cases, such as the Elefsina, Rafina or Lavrio site, where there was not adequate connection to public transportation, services of private transportation would be arranged by state and non-governmental actors operating on sites. However, due to insufficient budget allocation or funding, and as the immigration state's strategy moves towards 'cash' support, these transport services were cut down and eventually terminated. It is apparent, once again how the geographical location of the site is more than crucial in granting access to integration support services.

Nonetheless, and even if transportation connections to the city centre are poor, refugees residing in the refugee centres will travel to gain access to social, legal services, administrative centres, as well as job opportunities, shopping markets and creative

and recreational activities, most of them offered in bottom-up spaces of welcoming refugee practices. "Chora Community Space" in Exarcheia residential area, which is also close to the central market of Athens, would offer language classes, collective kitchen classes, and health support with an in-house dentistry service. "Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza", a self-organized and managed squat (2016) in a non-operating hotel building, offers accommodation, legal services, language lessons etc., having a vibrant presence in the central area of Athens contributing to the creation of an inclusive community. The above organizations operate within a network of self-organized spaces and squats that produce bottom-up practices of inclusion towards achieving integration.

At the same time, economic networks are created producing a bottom-up space of common places of exchange between the refugees and host community. These networks are created within the setting of the state-led refugee camps and are reproduced outside of the camps' material borders, through encounters of commerce. For instance, the residents of the camps in order to have access to basic needs, such as food, and recreational activities, they form spaces of social exchange through informal practices. Coffee shops, restaurants, small market places (Fig. 5,6) are encountered within the camps highlighting not only the vibrant refugee community that is enclosed in a bounded space, but most importantly the invisible connections and processes that the refugees develop. Social and financial connections which expand through commerce activities that are generated, though depart from the camp. In Elliniko Arrivals site the women's community would come together and produce knitted goods, such as gloves, baskets, decorative products, which later were sold in the city's centre informal markets. The daily travels towards Athens's centre gained multiple denotations, such as access to health system and legal services, social interactions through recreational activities and financial gain, redefining the existing spatial borders.

Figure 5. Skaramangkas Refugee Site in site mini market. A. Paraskevopoulou, 2017.

Figure 6. Skaramangkas Refugee Site in site pool table and coffee house. A. Paraskevopoulou, 2017.

In this sense, the material borders of the camps act as an 'edge' where different groups interact. Networks connecting camp life to the social structure and city life are producing an urban open system (Sennett, 2006), were borders are perceived as membranes, rather than territorial boundaries. Thus, the material walls, the actual bordered fencing surrounding the camps, when perceived in their immaterial manifestation, function as membranes being both porous and resistant. Porous in the sense that they allow for the communication with the local community and interaction between physical creation and social behaviour. This porosity, however, is depended on the people residing and managing the site, the informal processes that exist and are allowed to operate within it, and the ones that operate outside of it. At the same time, these informal spaces except from obtaining territorial materiality, they also attain

digital presence (Fig. 7), and consequently visibility beyond the physical space thus acknowledging and, in a way, formalizing the informal.
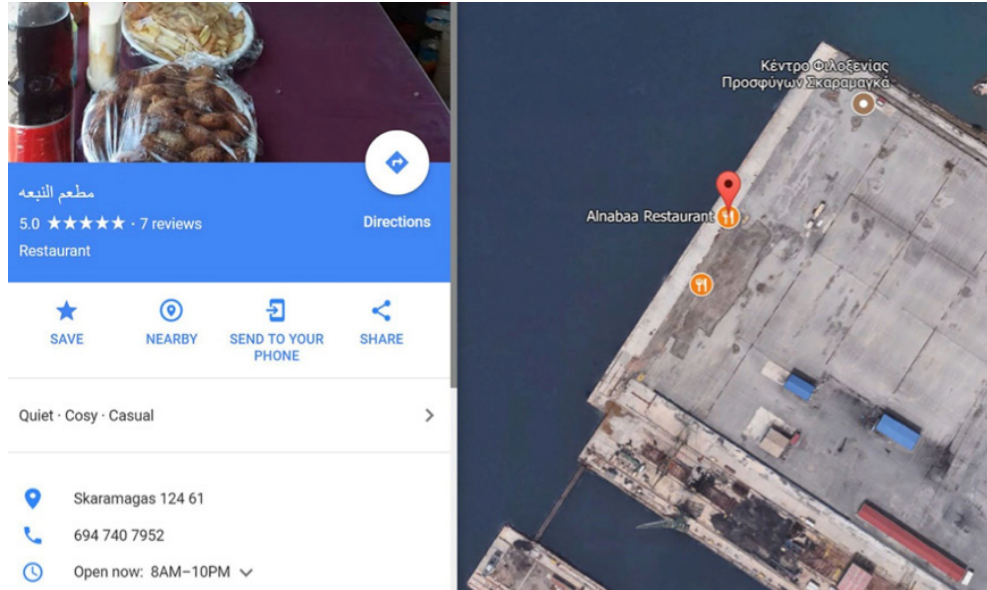

Figure 7. Alnabaa falafel restaurant in Skaramangkas Refugee Site. Source: googlemaps.com .

Being in the process of rebuilding their lost identity and individuality, refugees have achieved in building connections to the city and creating working places and business opportunities within and beyond the camp. They produce their own integration process enhancing their livelihoods, access to labour and creating their own employment opportunities. The non-visible aspects of social integration become visible, and thus spatialized, as the refugees reclaim their 'right to appear', their existence, presence and space within the urban. A second layer of integration processes becomes palpable, one that operates within informality, from the bottom-up, and which actively advocates towards the socio-spatial potentiality of integration.

CONCLUSION

How are these informal processes that underpin the socio-spatial elements of integration generally perceived within the state's policies? And how can integration, as framed within the Greek's state rhetoric, be attained through refugee led and formal led processes of inclusion? As I have illustrated above, it becomes evident that informal and formal led practices of integration operate in two disparate levels, which however when conceived holistic, compose a two layered system operating in a porous manner.

By dialectically engaging with the concept of integration, as it is framed in humanitarian aid interventions and as it is addressed in the state's migrant policies, I have argued towards the spatial characteristics of social, cultural and economic inclusion. My theoretical contribution lies in the critical examination of the concept of integration within territories of exclusion and the exploration of the undocumented practices of inclusion which surpass territorial limitations. Through an empirically informed research, I have explored the relationship among the geographical location of state-led refugee camps and chances for inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers with the local community and the social and economic life of the city. I have revisited the label of 'hospitality centres', following a policy document analysis of national migrant policies, and explored its limitations within the Greek state's regulatory framework. I have argued then that the geographical locations of the state-led refugee camps contribute to refugees' social segregation through state control, perpetuating the 'politics of invisibility' rather than fostering inclusion.

Specifically, I have examined practices of integration which operate within and beyond the refugee camp through two lenses that represent the two aforementioned layers. By re-examining the notion of the 'border', both material and immaterial, I illustrated how processes of integration are implemented within state-led refugee camps though formal procedures and informal practices. I have presented the way in which formal led responses in providing access to accommodation, heath, employment and community life are deemed inadequate to address the people's need. I have then articulated how informal practices of social and economic exchange materialize within and beyond the territorial and physical boundaries of state-led refugee camps,

producing a network of bottom-up spaces of inclusion. Through this exploration of the ground reality, which becomes more concrete, localized and sustained, I have argued towards the importance of understanding such informal practices as processes of integration which operate in a distinct level.

Unfortunately, these processes that underpin the socio-spatial potentiality of integration still remain unmapped, undocumented and unrecorded. However, they provide insightful understandings on how things develop on the ground; on how integration should be perceived through the ways it is spatially materialized in the urban fabric. At the same time, state led responses to integration move towards housing refugees within the urban fabric. Those vary from hotel rooms (UNHCR), individual apartments (PRAXIS, ARSIS), collective apartment buildings (Solidarity Now, CRS) to hosting refugees in Greek families (Solidarity Now) but also dedicated centres (day-centre, drop-in centre, etc.). This illustrates a shift aiming towards urban integration and spatial visibility, which nonetheless if considered unilateral will fail to attain its aspiration. What then is deemed necessary in order to achieve socio-spatial integration is, firstly a move towards perceiving processes of inclusion as a two layered system operating in a porous manner, and secondly a depart from the national scale to documenting the ground reality on the local scale.

NOTES

1. For more comprehensive presentation of the centers typology visit: http://www.refugeespaces.org/greece

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