

# Counting heads and channelling bodies. The hotspot centre Vial in Chios, Greece

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We had just completed an interview in the city of Chios, eponymous capital of the island, and were on our way to the hotspot Vial. It was in the early afternoon on a day in June 2016, and the heat in our car was clearly affecting us. We had been told that it was a mere 7 km from the city to the hotspot, and we believed that such a huge facility, where between one and two thousand migrants were being processed as well as accomodated, and where a number of European institutions and NGOs were active, should not be hard to find. We ascended into the hills surrounding Chios city, into an industrial area punctuated by countless small villages. At last, we found the local mini-market, which we had heard was a meeting point for migrants from Vial. Even though we asked for directions several times, we could not find the hotspot, and we were going around in circles on dirt roads.

When we finally found the hotspot – officially the Registration Centre of Chios Island – we stood before an enormous structure, a former aluminium factory turned waste processing plant turned refugee registration centre surrounded by countless containers on both sides, barbed wired fences and numerous parked cars indicating the rather large number of staff working in the centre. After having passed the first police check at the very entrance of the larger facility, and found admission by the police at the entrance to the structure, which included signing in into an enormous ledger and having our belongings searched, we were finally inside one of the centres which define the EU’s latest approach to controlling (refugee) migration and securing its external border.

## Genealogies of a concept

The so called *hotspot approach* was presented by the European Commission in May 2015, as part of a larger policy push termed the *European Agenda on Migration* (European Commission, 2015). A reform of the European border and migration policies had been one of the top priorities of the Juncker-Commission (Juncker, 2015), and was widely deemed imperative.



Figure 1: Entrance of Vial hotspot facility; Photo: Bernd Kasperek

The ongoing crisis of the Dublin system (Kasperek, 2016a), the diminished legitimacy of hardened borders in light of the ongoing deaths in the Mediterranean (Heller and Pezzani, 2016) and the failure of the externalisation paradigm after the destabilisation of the European Union’s neighbourhood in the wake of the Arab Spring had put the European border and migration regime on the defensive. In the *European Agenda on Migration*, the European Commission proposed a set of immediate actions as well as four more long term pillars for improved “migration management.” Amongst the immediate actions, the *hotspot approach* was labelled as putting the EU’s tools to better use. In the approach,

“the European Asylum Support Office, Frontex and Europol will work on the ground with frontline Member States to swiftly identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants. [...] Those claiming asylum will be immediately channelled into an asylum procedure where EASO support teams will help to process asylum cases as quickly as possible. For those not in need of protection, Frontex will help Member States by coordinating the return of irregular migrants. Europol and Eurojust will assist the host Member State with investigations to dismantle the smuggling and trafficking networks.” (European Commission, 2015: 6)

In a follow-up letter by the commissioner for migration, home affairs and citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, the “benefit” of the approach is characterised by the provision of “comprehensive and targeted support” by the relevant EU agencies, and specific reference is made to the relocation scheme (Avramopoulos, 2015), another element of the immediate actions of the *European Agenda on Migration*. Relocation means a specific and EU-internal resettlement for asylum seekers found highly likely to be recognised refugees, a departure from the ‘country of first entry’ rationale at the core of the Dublin system which lead to dissent within the EU as to the future of the block’s migration policy.

The emphasis on the identification, registration and fingerprinting of arriving migrants, as well as the reference to the relocation scheme, underlines that the *hotspot approach* is a specific answer to the crisis of Dublin. In short, the crisis is comprised of two main elements. The first is the deliberately reluctant practice of EU member states at the external border, namely Greece and Italy, to consistently register and fingerprint arriving migrants and to store their fingerprints in the Eurodac database. This aids and abets the second element, which is the largely autonomous secondary movement of migrants within the EU. Together, they undermine the very objective of the Dublin system, i.e. to force refugees and migrants to remain in the EU member states at the border. This of course is neither desired by the migrants nor the respective countries. The *hotspot approach* was designed to address both, by the means of a close supervision of the procedures by EU agencies under the guise of providing expertise.

The second genealogical strand the *hotspot approach* draws on is the notion of *transit processing centres* (TPC) first proposed in 2003 by the then prime minister of the UK, Anthony Blair, in the paper *New international approaches*

to *asylum processing and protection* (Blair, 2003). Akin to the so called *Pacific solution* of the Australian government in the early 2000s, the processing of asylum applications would be outsourced to centres located along the routes of migration, especially in Africa. This proposal was in 2004 picked up by the German and Italian ministers of interior, Otto Schily and Giuseppe Pisanu. For various reasons, these plans never came to fruition, but remained part of the imaginary inventory of the European border regime. The hotspot approach translates the notion of early interception outside the EU for a reality in which close cooperation with Third States is no longer feasible: both the absence of reliable partners as well as human rights concerns, most famously articulated in the *Hirsi v. Italy* case (European Court of Human Rights, 2012), constitute serious obstacles to externalisation. To this end, the translation implies a departure from a mere policy of exclusion.

## Implementation of the Hotspot Approach in Chios Island

Even though the *hotspot approach* was formulated way before what became to be known as the Summer of Migration in 2015, the Commission as well as the European Council saw it as the fitting instrument to organise the restabilisation of the European border regime. As soon as July 2015, the Commission was pushing for the implementation of the *hotspot approach* in Greece and in Italy, and two state of play reports, from September and October 2015 respectively (European Commission, 2016a, European Commission (2016c)), underline the pivotal role the EU's institutions saw in a fast implementation of the breadth of the approach in Greece.

In Greece, most of the five hotspots (on the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos) started operating in January 2016, after having been constructed by the Greek army. In Lesbos, the existing Moria reception facility was enlarged by containers,<sup>1</sup> the same was done in Samos, where an existing reception facility near the city of Vathy quadrupled in size. In Chios, the existing registration facility in Mirsinidi was woefully inadequate, without internet connection and with fingerprints taken with ink and paper. In October 2015, a new centre was opened in Tabakika, but could not be expanded. Thus, a completely new registration centre was constructed in Vial. For the purposes of this paper, we will focus on Vial, the centre piece of the *hotspot approach* in Chios island.

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<sup>1</sup>See Kuster and Tsianos (2016) for a description of the Moria hotspot in Lesbos. An English translation is forthcoming.

## EU-Turkey-Deal

In line with the *hotspot approach*, the city of Chios was initially promised that Vial would merely serve as a registration centre, through which migrants would pass rather swiftly. The EU-Turkey-Deal, which entered into force on the 20th of March 2016, changed this picture completely. Under the so called “common statement” (European Council, 2016), Turkey promised to stop the departure of migrants towards Greece and to readmit refugees from Greece, amongst other arrangements. With the passing of law 4375/2016, largely a transposition of the relevant EU regulations and directives concerning asylum to Greek law, the legal base for the return of Syrian nationals to Turkey was established. While not explicit in the law, the recent introduction of a protection status for Syrian refugees in Turkey as well as granting of access to the Turkish labour market allowed the Hellenic Asylum Service to declare Turkey either a Safe Third Country or a Country of First Asylum, depending on the individual circumstances of the case.

In order to facilitate the readmission of Syrian nationals to Turkey, the hotspot centres were declared closed facilities and the migrants were subjected to a “restriction of freedom”, i.e. detention, for the duration of 25 days as allowed for by law 4375/2016. The immediate result in at least three of the hotspots so far researched by us was an outbreak of violent protests, followed by a peculiar re-opening of the centres. While migrants were legally still subjected to the “restriction of freedom”, they were free to leave the centres. A second order of “restriction of movement” however barred them from leaving the islands, while the centres themselves remained largely inaccessible for outside observers, such as journalists, NGOs or researchers. The *clopen* (both open and closed) state of the hotspots characterises the common appearance of the different hotspots: the barbed wired fences surrounding the containers are regularly punctuated by holes. They are neither concealed nor do the authorities show any intention to close them.

Effectively, this leads to a fracturing of both the Greek asylum system as well as the Greek territory. The five islands were excised from the rest of Greece, with a large migrant population barred from leaving the island through police controls at both ports and airports, and operating under the regime of readmission/inadmissibility (see below), in contrast to mainland Greece, where between June and August 2016, a large pre-registration operation was conducted under the auspices of the UNHCR in order to register the migrant population and ensure their access to an orderly asylum procedure.

## Managing the hotspot

The hotspots are run by the former *First Reception Service* (FRS), now renamed to *Reception and Identification Service* (RIS), a name change indicative of the recent shifts in EU policy objectives. Due to the constraints imposed on the

Greek state by the creditors of the Troika, which allows no creation of new positions in government service, the FRS/RIS in Chios is only thinly staffed. It seems to be routine to rotate more experienced administrators from their regular posts into and out of the hotspot every few weeks, while the remainder of the staff is employed on the basis of short term contracts. At the time of our research the hiring of the temporary staff even went through the NGO Praksis and the Greek employment agency O.A.E.D.

Further present is the Greek police, which guards the camp and its internal partitions and also plays a role in the identification and registration of new arrivals along with Frontex, the European border agency; Hellenic Asylum service (HAS) and EASO, the European Asylum Support Office, who deal with the asylum applications; UNHCR and IOM, who carry out limited efforts to inform migrants of their rights; and a number of IGOs and NGOs active in the field of medical care, translation, etc.



Figure 2: Satellite image of the structure at the centre of Vial hotspot, with the container areas for accommodation not present yet. Source: Screenshot/Google Maps

Architecturally, the large structure of the former aluminium factory, which is around 400m long and 80m wide and in whose first half, waste processing is still taking place, is between two large areas (Alpha and Beta) of containers where migrants are accommodated and which are separately fenced off. Access to the structure is only possible through two gates secured by the Greek police, with the criteria of admission unclear to us. The inside of the structure is again characterised by containers. A group of 16 containers is situated in the middle of the structure, while the walls are also lined with containers.

While eight of the 16 central containers are used for short term accommodation,

the other eight are used for identification and registration. The containers by the wall of the main entrance are used by UNHCR and IOM, as well as Praksis, the NGO providing medical and mental health care, while on the side, FRS/RIS, HAS and the Praksis psychologist have their offices. This spatial layout of the inside of the structure is indicative of the central priority of registration in the hotspot. All containers that relate to this function are in the centre, while administration, medical and asylum services are at the periphery. The section of EASO is secluded in the very back, additionally secured by a barbed wired fence, with admission to this part regulated by a private security company.

## The Pipeline

The “pipeline”, a term an EASO-officer we interviewed used to describe the procedure upon arrival of the new migrants, consists of queuing in front of the container in the centre of the structure. One by one, migrants are then admitted to the first container, where Frontex, nominally under the supervision of Greek police, seeks to identify, i.e. establish the nationality of the person. This is largely done through an interview aided by an interpreter employed by Frontex, who assesses dialect and accent, and through specific questions that seek to establish the person’s regional knowledge, such as questions concerning popular culture, notable figures, religious specificities, street names and landmarks, design of bills and license plates, etc. To this end, Frontex has developed a handbook of 110 questions, with the questions being rotated in between interviews so that knowledge of the specific nature of the questions can not be passed on between migrants while waiting outside. Also, the belongings of the persons interviewed are being searched for clues as to their identity. After these interviews are concluded, families unite at the back of the container to be forwarded to the next step together.

Following the nationality assessment, migrants queue once again outside the next row of containers until they are admitted. Inside these containers, their photographs and fingerprints are taken. Their personal data is collated, and then both entered into a national database by the name of *Kartographisi Kikloforias Allodapon* (Mapping of Foreigners’ Circulation, the database shared by FRS/RIS, HAS and Greek police) as well as into Eurodac. The latter happens off-site, either through the local police department (this is certainly the case for Lesbos), or through the Eurodac-Unit in Athens. However, the police has direct connectivity with the Schengen Information System (SIS) as well as the relevant Interpol and Europol databases. Especially after the Paris attacks of November 2015 and the alleged involvement of persons that had passed through Lesbos, security checks against these databases are a new task in the hotspots.

The restrictions of freedom and movement are issued, and in case of a declaration of intent to apply for asylum, a forwarding paper to HAS is created. All of this is on paper, in three copies, that all need to be signed by the current FRS/RIS administrator. Case numbers are assigned. Afterwards, a health check is carried

out by the doctor provided by the NGO Praksis, and the health card is also issued on spot. Accommodation in the containers outside the structure is assigned as a next step, although due to low capacity in the hotspot, migrants may also be allowed to stay at other places on the island.

The only event that could cause this “pipeline” to freeze is a loss of internet connectivity, and thus access to the databases, which seems to happen rather often. As one FRS/RIS administrator told us, in this event, “everything stops.” Even if all runs smoothly, this last container where the fingerprinting is taking place is the loudest and busiest place of the whole process for many reasons. Several people are admitted to be photographed, and later queue again for fingerprinting at two desks. Handling each fingerprint scanner requires two Frontex officials, one standing while maintaining the screen of the scanner (cleaning it and holding the person’s fingers and palm down) and one seated at the computer, working the imaging and forwarding the scans. At the next two desks, two Greek police officers prepare an individual’s file while the fingerprinting is happening. To our understanding, all information gathered about a person in the previous steps is collected at this point. This process is referred to as “dropping”. This is an adequate description, as bits of information trickle, out of order, into the computers at these desks. It demands quite an effort from the officers, who at that moment of receiving partly filled forms, several photos, case numbers and fingerprint scans, must make sure that the person they see in front of them corresponds to these items of information. That may include shouting at other police officers at the very back, or shouting names, or asking people for clarifications. In contrast to all other containers that were as cold as fridges and almost empty, there was at all times a crowd of more than 30 people in an environment without air conditioning and always open doors, and with limited mutual communication between the Frontex officers from France and the Greek police. The constant barrage of arguably bad Greek music from one of the computers would inhibit communication, even if there was a shared language. But English proficiency seemed to be lacking on both sides.

During the time that we spent in Vial it appeared that the overall procedure was taking place immediately upon arrival of a boat. We observed the FRS/RIS official urgently calling police and Praksis personnel to attend their posts on a public holiday morning, so that the process could start and papers be issued for the 60 people that had arrived at early morning hours of that very day. That Saturday everybody stayed until around 8pm to process all the new arrivals. Running the hotspot appeared to be a job that requires from FRS/RIS officials to know who lives in which container, what problems they suffer or cause, try to reason with people all the time on an informal, personal level and figure out how every new addition to a container can be negotiated on spot. But we were also lucky to observe a change in administration the days after that holiday. The new FRS/RIS official expressed to us a difference of opinion about what it means to run the place, setting boundaries on the degree of engaging with the residents of the containers and how the new arrivals can be registered in an orderly fashion. Her instructions on the first day were to notify the new arrivals that they will

be processed through the “pipeline” on the morning of the next day, and that it was their responsibility to catch the bus to Vial and be on time.

With both officials we discussed the challenges they face in their job, and to what degree they have been relying or sticking to the guidelines and manuals provided by the FRS/RIS (SOPs, Standard Operation Procedure) to handle them. For the purposes of this paper we can not extensively present the material related to the use of SOPs, but want to briefly point out that they are the only guidelines on how to streamline the “workflow” of the hotspot. From our understanding, the SOPs are not binding, and in many ways the reality of Vial could never correspond to the abstract SOP scenarios dating way back to before the implementation of the EU-Turkey-Deal. While one official aims to be pragmatic, the other favours order. Despite the seemingly stringent *hotspot approach* and its formulation on paper, Vial hotspot is, to a certain degree, an informal environment of improvisation.

## **The regime of readmission and inadmissibility**

In case the intent to make an asylum application was declared during the registration phase, the case (which may comprise an entire family) is forwarded to the Hellenic Asylum Service, which schedules an interview. Like in the case of FRS/RIS, the HAS in Vial is only thinly staffed. This however does not apply to EASO, which had around eight so called experts present, a number that was supposed to grow to 25 in late June. Since most cases in Moria had been handled, EASO staff was moved to the next island.

Due to this imbalance, the asylum interviews in Vial are conducted by EASO, again with the help of interpreters hired by EASO. After the interview, the EASO expert write a so called “opinion”, which is then forwarded to HAS. While HAS takes the final decision, they seem to rely on the input of EASO extensively, as we were told, by an EASO expert, that a contradicting decision “rarely” takes place. The sentiment of close cooperation was echoed by the representative of HAS, who used the Greek expression “to go hand in hand” to describe the relation to their European counterparts.

Despite both institutions involved carrying the term ‘asylum’ in their name, the decision taken however is less about a particular asylum claim. Since the EU-Turkey-Deal, HAS and EASO primarily carry out a so called “inadmissibility” check. As explained above, under the terms of the EU-Turkey-Deal and law 4375/2016, Turkey can be considered either a Safe Third Country, i.e. the country where the applicant should file for asylum, or a Country of First Asylum, i.e. the country which has already granted a protection status to the applicant. In both cases, he or she is declared inadmissible to the Greek asylum system, and thus has to be readmitted to Turkey. This inadmissibility and readmission check mostly applies to Syrians, whose refugee characteristic is not in dispute. For all other nationalities, the old criteria of credibility of an asylum claim apply.

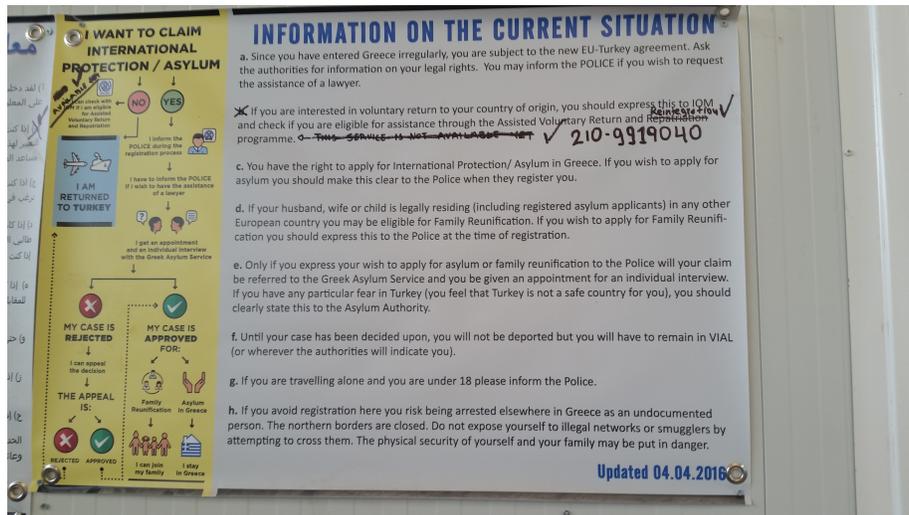


Figure 3: An informational poster inside Vial, explaining the procedure after the EU-Turkey-Deal; Photo: Bernd Kasperek

However, their cases are usually pushed to the back of the queue.

This particular regime of inadmissibility and readmission, which constructs a parallel to the Dublin system in reference to Turkey, erodes the institution of asylum in two ways. The first is the rather obvious observation that the inadmissibility checks erect a barrier to the actual asylum system. An asylum claim, however well founded and convincingly argued, still leads to a mere inadmissibility check. In a weird echo of the European border regimes' obsession with migratory routes over the last decade, it is more important to argue that one is not safe on the route, i.e. in Turkey, than in the country of origin, e.g. Syria. Even if the old, and arbitrary distinction between “economic migrants” and “political refugees” is still in play, as mostly migrants from the Maghreb and Pakistan experience rather painfully, in Vial this has faded to the background and has been relegated to the mainland. In a further twist, this has made Syrian refugees more likely to be deported to Turkey than other nationalities. This at least in theory, since effectively, readmission does not happen.

The second ongoing erosion of asylum that we witnessed in Vial is the rise of the notion of vulnerability, steeped in a humanitarian rationale. Being recognised as vulnerable is the only way to be fast-tracked, and one of the few ways of leaving the hotspot, and the island, towards mainland Greece. It is important to take note of the fact that the categories of vulnerability do not map onto the “economic migrant vs. refugee” rationale of asylum, but rather open a second dimension largely orthogonal: Under the still rather broad, but ultimately arbitrarily adjustable categories of vulnerability, origin and persecution play no role. Notably, there is no central service or node in the pipeline dealing with

vulnerability assessment. Rather, vulnerability acts as a boundary category that can be invoked by the various organisations and individuals to push for a specific agenda. Mostly though, migrants are called upon to come forward if they consider themselves vulnerable according to a set of published criteria<sup>2</sup>. The only other way to leave Vial is through the mechanism of family reunification under Dublin. Relocation, despite the Commission’s desired interplay between *hotspot approach* and relocation, is restricted to the mainland of Greece.

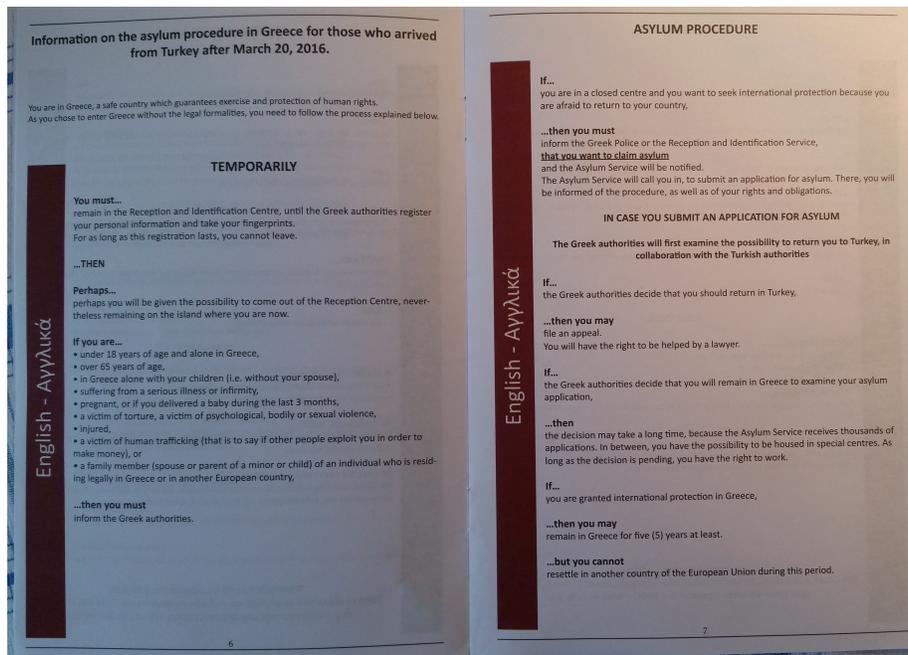


Figure 4: The first two of in total three pages of an information brochure distributed in Vial, published by the Greek government and funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the EU. Photo: Bernd Kasperek

Information available for migrants in the hotspot is scant. Both brochures distributed and posters attached to the walls offer mostly a description of the procedure, detailing a flow through the hotspots with certain procedural junctions. Fittingly, the visual language of the information is the flowchart, with its deterministic “if this then that” logic, also reproduced in the official brochure of the Greek government. The language of the information is phrased in obligations and prohibitions, rather than detailing the rights (e.g. to appeal certain decisions) held by the migrants. Even the information about the categories of vulnerability mandates that one has to report: “[...] then you must inform the Greek authorities”. There is absolutely no mention that being vulnerable translates into a higher degree of protection. It is no surprise that access to legal representation

<sup>2</sup>As depicted on page 6 in figure 4.

is entirely non-existent. Restricting access to information and rights is consistent with the “pipeline” metaphor, as they would turn channellable bodies into persons, whose objections, appeals and insistence of different treatment would hold up the flow.

## **Lives (and Machines) at Risk**

One particular notion that our combined research encountered in both the Lesvos and Chios hotspot is a paramount concern for personal safety articulated by staff in the hotspot centres. After the EASO staff of Moria was trapped inside the hotspot during the riots in the beginning of April 2016, they demanded a separate “escape bridge” to be constructed, to facilitate their flight from the hotspot in the event of violence (see Kuster and Tsianos (2016), p. 24 for a photograph). The deployment of the EASO experts to Vial was severely delayed by concerns for their safety. Only when the EASO area in the back of the structure, architecturally separated from the rest of the containers by a gate, a fence and barbed wire on top and secured by a private security company, as well as a separate emergency exit in both the structure itself and the fence surrounding the whole hotspot was created (paid for by EASO), did the EASO personell start to arrive in Chios.

Curiously, the two emergency gates of EASO intersect with and contradict the detention-like architecture of the hotspot itself. It cuts through the layers of separation between both staff and migrants (the walls of the structure), and migrants and outer world (the outer fence) respectively, even if the latter is no longer enforced. In order to safely connect the two emergency gates, another two gates have been erected, in order to interrupt the connection between Alpha and Beta. From the construction of the those interruptor gates it is obvious that they are unidirectionally designed to stop an imaginary migrant mob from entering EASO’s escape route in the event.

Similar concerns are voiced by Frontex. In an interview with its coordinator on the island, it became clear that a feeling of being trapped in the middle of a large migrant population prevails amongst the staff deployed to Vial: “We are 20, and surrounded by 2000.” This assessment was echoed by a Greek police officer working in the fingerprinting container. He told us that during the April riots, all fingerprinting equipment had been destroyed by the “angry mob”. He had previously worked in the former registration centre of Tabakika, and praised its architectural and operational layout as more secure. He described the workflow as linear and directed, meaning that migrants would be channeled through the registration procedure, and would then exit and leave, with only the minimally necessary interaction.

The second administator of Vial that we met made a similar comparison with her previous post. She had worked in the administration of the Orestiada/Fylakio *First Reception Centre*, a detention centre, in the Evros region that was opened

in 2013. For one, the centre in Orestiada was more stretched out spatially, with a lot of open space between the accommodation and the administration of the camp. She also pointed out that the administration block was not located in the very centre, with the particular areas of the centre having distinct access gates. Movement of detainees in the camp was further restricted and monitored, while a central loudspeaker system gave the administration privileged access to all detainees.

The conflicting objectives of securing the staff while allowing the necessary functioning, i.e. interaction with the migrants of the hotspot can be traced through the access policy towards the structure. While the police guarding the gate was clearly trying to minimise access, it could not be avoided, since all functional elements of the hotspot, especially asylum offices, health care, information, as well as shadow, electricity to charge phones etc. were located inside. There was a constant attempt by the police to expel migrants from the structure as well as a counter-move of migrants wanting to appropriate the space.

However, this constant concern for their own safety was not echoed by everybody working in Vial. Asked if he shared these concerns, the head representative of the Hellenic Asylum Service told us:

My primary concern is the conditions that these people are living [in] here, because they're awful, inhuman actually. So I'm not feeling fear that someone will make me some kind of harm or whatever.

## Making sense of the hotspots in Greece and at large

Taking into account the architectural and functional organisation of Vial, the registration and identification process is at the centre. Both the spatial layout as well as the way in which this part of the “pipeline” has been streamlined to take place within hours of the arrival of migrants in Chios underline this. This inner section represents the *hotspot approach* as drawn up by the Commission. The outer layers surrounding this inner core, like asylum, long-term accommodation and detention, are additions that have risen in relevance mainly with the EU-Turkey-Deal. The *clopen* character of Vial, the criticism concerning the spatial layout and the incessant emphasis on the risk of those working in Vial (and its crystallisations such as the peculiar EASO escape route) indicate that Vial was constructed as a registration centre, and that its transformation to a detention centre after the EU-Turkey-Deal was constrained by the initial architectural decisions. The Vial we visited in June 2016 thus was a hybrid materialisation of two conflicting policy rationales. In this conclusion, we aim to dis-entangle them.

The existing discussion of the *hotspot approach* relies strongly on the paradigm

of exclusion. Vicki Squire argues that hotspots are not just detention centres, but indeed part of an emerging architecture of coercion (Squire, 2016) that is characterised by massive disenfranchisement. Martina Tazzioli argues in a similar vein in her piece on the Moria hotspot (Tazzioli, 2016), highlighting the elements of containment, detention and deportation. Didier Fassin argues that the purpose of the hotspot centres is to enforce the old dichotomy of “true refugees or economic migrants” (Fassin, 2016), leading to relocation for some and deportation for the rest. Indeed, his genealogy of the hotspots, and European migration policy at large, draws heavily on both the externalisation and exclusion paradigm. Here, hotspots are merely the “last of a long series of strategies invented by the European Union to deal with the refugee question” (Fassin, 2016), by which Fassin means strategies to stop refugees and migrants from entering the EU.

However, both lines of argument have to be interrogated critically. The broader research of our project has shown that to assume that Turkey is merely a willing gatekeeper for the EU given the price is right, as Fassin’s historical line from Morocco to Libya to the EU-Turkey-Deal suggests, is to grossly ignore both the internal dynamics in Turkey as well as its distinct role and interests in the Syrian civil war.<sup>3</sup> The obvious fragility of the EU-Turkey-Deal attests to this.

The infrastructural and exclusionary argument, likening the current hotspot centres to “waiting zones and detention centres” (Fassin, 2016), does not account for the intense priority of registration and the emphasis the Commission puts on the relocation scheme. Even though the implementation of the relocation scheme is lagging severely, as Fassin is quick to point out, the Commission has not dropped the scheme, showing the stamina that has characterised most of the Commission’s proposals and even being willing to enforce relocation through fines against unwilling member states.

The ambivalence between the policy objective of an all-encompassing registration, identification and forwarding on the one hand and detention and deportation on the other hand can be detected in both Fassin’s and Tazzioli’s description of the hotspot centres. Indeed, Martina Tazzioli also points out that the introduction of the elements associated with the paradigm of exclusion have only arrived in the hotspot Moria with the EU-Turkey-Deal. Our description of the Vial hotspot shows how these two approaches came together, and how their intersection formed a very particular assemblage of rationalities and practices.

The *hotspot approach* predates the events that lead to the EU-Turkey-Deal, and promises to give an answer to the crisis of Schengen and Dublin even before the Summer of Migration. Clearly, the strategic horizon of the *hotspot approach* extends years into the future, and takes into account the realisation that the world and Europe’s neighbourhood have grown increasingly instable, and that therefore the EU will witness further movements of migrants whose refugee

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<sup>3</sup>We want to thank Fırat Genç, Gerda Heck and Sabine Hess for adding this perspective. Also see the Harek(et)Act project which aims to report on the EU-Turkey border regime from both sides: <http://harekact.bordermonitoring.eu/>.

characteristic cannot be disputed. At the same time, the *hotspot approach* is a strategic tool to shift sovereignty within the EU subtly towards Brussels by means of deploying EU institutions at its border (cr. Kasperek, 2016b). It signals a second wave of europeanisation (see also (Mrozek, 2016) for the ongoing discussion around the mandate of the coming European Border and Coast Guard Agency).

The EU-Turkey-Deal, on the other hand, is a specific reaction to the events of late 2015, and serves the purpose of effecting a breathing space in which the *hotspot approach* and reception infrastructure in Greece can be implemented, another checkmark on the Commission's *Roadmap back to Schengen* (European Commission, 2016b). This is not to say that the EU-Turkey-Deal will be jettisoned any time soon. To the contrary, EASO seems to be very much invested in developing the methodology of the EU-Turkey-Deal, despite its apparent fragility, into a general EU framework for asylum.

In fact, the EU-Turkey-Deal also poses a bump in that roadmap, in so far as the restoration, and completion of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is concerned. The excision of the five islands from this common asylum regime, their detachment from the relocation process, and the transformation of the hotspot infrastructure is a hold-up on the way towards the new government of migratory flows that we have seen emerge with the *European Agenda on Migration*. For the hotspots are supposed to be registration and identification centres, whose purpose is to count, accelerate and channel migratory flows into the appropriate procedures (national asylum, relocation, family reunification, deportation), and not detention centres decelerating, even impeding the onwards movements.

With Chios island and its migrant population of around 2.500 already near the breaking point in June 2016, despite the lowest numbers of arrivals, the creation of detention centres for tens of thousands of migrants is not a feasible option, even for policymakers that fancy the *Pacific solution*. The promise of the *hotspot approach* is an entirely different one. It is all about counting and registering the mobile population as early as possible, and dictating the terms under which mobility may or may not happen.

Dis-entangling the *hotspot approach* from the EU-Turkey-Deal has allowed us to show their differing rationalities and objectives and how they materialise in concrete locations. However, and this might be one of the central insight of ethnographic border regime analysis, the particular intersection and implementation of both paradigms in the hotspot in Vial and the larger island of Chios is only one further node in the genealogies of the European border regime, with future strands drawing on both. Even if the EU-Turkey-Deal will not hold up, pure forms will not emerge. Confronted with the ever shifting movements of migration, the European border regime will continue to move from one quick fix to the next, swapping one rationality offering one particular insight into migration for the next, promising yet another avenue of control.

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