

2nd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SCIENCES

Public Policy at the Crossroads: Social Sciences Leading the Way?

Rethymno, 15-16 June 2018

Education as “distinction” – Issues of differentiated “habitus” in informal educational provision for refugee children, in the island of Lesbos

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Abstract

From the summer of 2015 some of the Aegean Islands (mainly *Lesbos, Chios, Kos, Leros, Samos*) have received a huge influx of refugees, which by far exceeded existing capabilities in reception and hospitality. Under the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, migrants arriving in Greece are now expected to be sent back to Turkey if they do not apply for asylum or their claim is rejected. That, in combination with the increasing anti-immigration rhetoric in some EU countries of the Central and Eastern Europe, and the ensuing tightening of the EU border controls, started to create a sense of an “entrapment” of the newcomers (migrants/refugees) inside the Greek territory.

Refugee who decided (unwillingly or not) to apply for asylum in Greece, have –among other things– to rapidly adapt themselves to the new socio-economic environment. Their offspring are required by law to register in the local public schools, either through special “reception classes”, or through the so-called “Refugee Educational Support Classes”, which may be run during the morning or evening hours, and can be offered even inside the ‘Reception and Identification Centres’ (RICs) set up by the Greek Asylum Service.

This paper focuses on the case of Lesbos (the biggest in size of all the Aegean islands, and the one that received the biggest inflow of refugees in the last four years), and it attempts to capture key aspects of educational provision for refugee children/adolescents (6-17 year old) at: 1) an official RIC, 2) a municipal host-camp, and 3) a refugee shelter run by NGOs and Solidarity groups. The study’s target population is educators working in the RIC, the camp and the shelter, who offer courses to refugee minors, as well as general support services to

their families. The field research combines semi-structured interviews with those volunteers and participant observation at the sites where they carry out their learning activities.

Initially, informed by the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, especially his notion of *habitus* (1977, 1984, 1998), we attempt to explore the conscious or unconscious formation of differentiated “horizons for action” between native educators, on one hand, and refugees/students, on the other, in the sense that each individual based on her/his own *habitus*, which is heavily conditioned by certain qualities and quantities of “economic”, “social” and “cultural” *capital*, exercises widely contrasting strategies and develops diverse actions resulting in differing outcomes. Then, based on the theoretical work of Michel Agier (2011, 2016) concerning the temporal, social and spatial dimensions of the “border ritual”, we will study the way those involved in those very “fluid” educational settings, create, reproduce and quite often enforce new kinds of educational “borders” upon their (vulnerable) subjects.

Keywords: *migrants, refugees, Aegean Sea, Lesvos, education, habitus, distinction, socio-spatial segregation*

1. Introduction

From the summer of 2015, Greece has experienced a huge influx of refugees, which by far exceeded existing capabilities in reception and hospitality (given also the stark socio-economic condition of a country already in its sixth year of recession). In 2014 the number of arrivals in Greece by sea was estimated at 41,000 persons, in 2015 the number climbed to more than 856,000, it dropped to 173,450 in 2016, then down to 29,718 in 2017, and for the first 6 months of 2018 (last update July 8, 2018) it was 14,387 (<http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>).

Throughout this crisis, refugees and migrants arriving in Europe have not intended to stay in Greece, the first country of arrival for long, but instead aim to continue their journey onwards. Circumstances “started to change drastically as of mid-February 2016 with the progressive establishment of border restrictions between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece, followed by further restrictions along the Western Balkans route, leading to an effective closure of the route on 8 March 2016 for non-EU citizens without requisite documentation” (UNHCR, 2016, p. 10). Under the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, migrants arriving in Greece are now expected to be sent back to Turkey if they do not apply for asylum or their claim is rejected. That, in combination with the increasing anti-immigration rhetoric in some EU countries of the Central and Eastern Europe, and the ensuing tightening of the EU border controls, started to create a sense of an “entrapment” of the newcomers (migrants/refugees) inside the Greek territory. In total, Greece is currently (end of April 2018) hosting approx. 54,700 persons: 41,100 in the mainland and 13,600 on the islands (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63723>).

Some of the Aegean Islands close to the Turkish coastline (mainly *Lesvos, Chios, Kos, Leros, Samos*) shared the largest burden of the refugee population. **Lesvos** has been deeply affected by major refugee flows. According to official figures (see <http://www.unhcr.gr/sites>, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/64636>, and http://asylo.gov.gr/?page_id=143), from January to the end of April 2018, 7,275 persons applied for asylum in Lesvos (a total of **25,500 from June 2013**), as compared to 211 in Rhodes, and 2,094 in Samos (3,098 and 9,642 from June 2013, respectively). According to some estimates, “[O]ut of the one million refugees that entered Europe, nearly one fifth of them –more than 200,000” used Skala Sykamnias, a village on the northern coast of Lesvos, as their entry point (Papataxiarchis, 2016).

Refugees who decided (unwillingly or not) to apply for asylum in Greece, have –among other things— to rapidly adapt themselves to the new socio-economic environment. Their offspring are required by law to register in the local public schools, either through special “reception classes”, or through the so-called “Refugee Educational Support Classes”, which may be run during the morning or evening hours, and can be offered even inside the “Reception and Identification Centres” (RICs) set up by the Greek Asylum Service (MoE, 2016a,b,c).

This paper focuses on the case of **Lesvos**, and it attempts to capture key aspects of educational provision for refugee children/adolescents (6 to 17-year-olds) at: a) an official RIC, b) a municipal host-camp, and c) a refugee shelter run by NGOs and Solidarity groups. The study’s target population is educators working in the RIC, the camp and the shelter, who offer informal education classes to refugee minors, as well as general support services to their families. The field research combines semi-structured interviews with those volunteers and participant observation at the sites where they carry out their learning activities. For the purpose of this paper (which is part of an ongoing process), we will limit our analysis on the semi-structured interviews.

Initially, informed by the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, especially his notion of *habitus* (1977, 1984, 1988, 1990a,b,c, 1993, 1998), we attempt to explore the conscious or unconscious formation of differentiated “horizons for action” between native educators, on one hand, and refugees/students, on the other, in the sense that each individual based on her/his own habitus, which is heavily conditioned by certain qualities and quantities of “economic”, “social” and “cultural” *capital*, exercises widely contrasting strategies and develops diverse actions resulting in differing outcomes. Then, based on the theoretical work of Michel Agier (2011, 2016) concerning the temporal, social and spatial dimensions of the “border ritual”, we will study the way those

involved in those very “fluid” educational settings, create, reproduce and quite often enforce new kinds of educational “borders” upon their (vulnerable) subjects (see also Bourdieu, 1998, p. 3). Finally, wishing to develop a relational way of analyzing real-life situations, we try to highlight the dynamic character of the human interactions at the examined sites. Our ethnographic approach resulted –so far— in a more nuanced perception of a socio-spatial segregation, which is not uniform across the examined sites, nor is unrelated to each individual habitus of the persons involved in the informal educational activities and their distinct trajectories. What is emerging from our study is the dominance of different “spatial practices” between the three sites, due to their original configurations and operation rules, but also due to the coexistence of and interaction among the local people (the educators) and the refugees: “PIKPA” seems to justify its fame as an open and solidarity camp, a welcome space with participatory practices; “Karatepe” operates as an “open-closed”, very controlled municipality camp, what one might call an “intermediate space”; and “Moria” is portrayed as a “closed-open”, official camp (“hot-spot”), an alienating, precarious space, where education is a “privilege”.

2. The notion of *habitus*

Along with the other two famous notions of the “cultural capital” (and its various forms and manifestations) and of the “field”, Bourdieu developed also an understanding of the operation of practices occurring in social relations, through the use of the concept “strategy”, which is understood as a specific orientation of practice. In contrast to the way the term is used in ordinary language, where it is based on conscious calculation, strategy in Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus is dependent on “habitus”, which as a result of socialization engenders in individuals a “disposition” below the level of consciousness to act or think in certain ways (Bourdieu, 1988, 1998; Reay, 2004, 2015). Habitus, is “genetically (as well as structurally) linked to a position” and it expresses both *the space* of the different or the opposed positions constitutive of social space [...] and a practical stance *towards this space*” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 2; our emphasis). Thus, it is the “basis of strategies of reproduction that tend to maintain *separations, distances and relations of order(ing)*, hence [...] reproducing the entire system of differences constitutive of the social order” (ibid., p. 3; our emphasis).

The role of habitus in educational practices is very important analytic tool for understanding attitudes and practices that produce or reproduce “distances” and “distinctions” between differently positioned persons in the social space(s). This is because education in industrial –as well as post-industrial— societies is usually associated to a more “meritocratic” social model and is perceived as a tool in the hands of organized polities in order to combat inequalities and injustices, and promote social mobility (Apple, 1981; Boudon, 1974; Halsey, Heath & Ridge, 1980; Husen, 1974; Parsons, 1959).

In the case of the most vulnerable segments of the human population (i.e. the forced migrants and the refugees), such “distances” and “distinctions” become more evident as these people, living a precarious life, at the borders (geographic, as well as social) of the contemporary “globalized” world, notions such as that of habitus can acquire wider resonance on the examination of the new divisions, border constructions and control of “mobilities”, which shape the object of enquiry for a new “anthropology of/in the border”, in the age of a constant flux (and not just a migratory one) (Agier, 2016).

3. Agier’s “border ritual”

Anthropologist Michel Agier wrote extensively about the temporal, social and spatial dimensions of the “border ritual” (2011, 2016), in the sense that in the very “fluid” social settings that have been and are being created by increasing population movements (tourists, athletes, artists, politicians, expatriate workers, migrants, refugees, aid-organization staff, business people, etc.), there are certain people and groups of people that, due to their socialization and their objective situation within the existing division of labour and social hierarchies, reproduce and quite often enforce new kinds of “borders” upon their (vulnerable) subjects. He claims that the “abolition of certain local and national borders” is linked to the creation of “new networks with extendible borders”, and

that “the reality of this global circulation [...] that ‘traverse’ the planet” is counterbalanced by the “existence of the reverse narrative, territorial and ‘indigenous’” (Agier, 2016, p. 45).

Through an extensive anthropological examination of the various “borderlands” around the globe (from the 70’s), and by focusing mostly on the precarious settings in various refugee camps (small or large) at or close to certain state borders, he pays attention to the subjective geography of those “border dwellers”, those always in “transition”, and draws attention to the way new “divisions” are constructed and re-constructed, configured and re-configured. In that sense, in the new “cosmopolitan” condition, he finds not an extinction but a *transformation* and a *shifting* of borders, beyond and within the traditional (recognized by international agreements) geographical limits: borders that always deal with dynamic and often unpredictable attempts for “identity formation”, and which are based on *economic* (mostly *class*, but not exclusively), *educational*, *ideological*, *technological*, *language*, *ethnic*, *racial*, *religious*, and *gender* characteristics (Agier, 2016, chap. 5; see also Appandurai, 1996).

4. Aim of the study

In our study we try to capture key aspects of educational provision for refugee children/adolescents (6-17 year old) in the island of Lesbos, Greece. The target group of this “on-going” study, are school-age minors (i.e. below 18 years of age) who are offered informal classes on Greek language and some preparatory tutorials in various “core” subjects of the formal curriculum of the Greek primary & secondary school. This group encapsulates all the “precariousness” of the life of refugees, since, apart from their other “special” needs (for food, shelter and general wellbeing), they (and their families) face legal requirements by the Greek state to register to the local state schools, because formal schooling is *compulsory* for anyone who resides within the Greek territory. We are interested in exploring how these “border dwellers” deal with these requirements, and how the “locals” who are engaged in educational provision treat them, consciously or not.

In order to clarify why we chose the particular target group in this study (i.e the “local educators” and not the refugees themselves), we need to remind that Lesbos, from the beginning of the crisis, is a unique example of a local administration that had to adapt and cope with the humanitarian crisis despite the *absence of central planning*, and has become a “new –at least for an EU country– and experimental model of ‘humanitarian governance,’ involving international organisations, European institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)” (Psimitis, Georgoulas & Nagopoulos, 2017, p. 1). All these entities, in co-operation with the central and regional authorities and the local community, maintained operational control and response to first reception and care necessities, on the assumption that the refugees are there only in the interim, until they could continue their journey to their final destination (ibid.).

Research questions that inform and guide –but not limit-- our study are:

1. How do the “local people” (i.e the citizens of Lesbos) and the “foreigners” (the refugees, whether adults or minors) communicate, act and interact?
2. What are the locals’ intentions regarding the educational interventions for refugee children?
3. What models (if any) do the (volunteer) educators have in mind for the “integration” of refugee children into the local community?
4. What sort of pedagogical methods do the educators employ in order to “educate” their “students”, and which are their main aims in the curriculum content they offer?
5. Which differences in perceptions about the “reality” do exist between the two poles of the educational relationship (i.e. between the “educators” and the “students”)?
6. Those differences –if any– are expressed openly (consciously) or manifested in a more covert way (unconsciously), due to different, socially embedded and construed, “habitués”?
7. Is there any awareness of the barriers (conjectural and structural, mental & physical) that impinge on the educators’ efforts to educate –much more to *emancipate*– their students?

8. What are their proposals for the amelioration of the life and educational trajectories of the refugee minors?

We believe that the situational approach that Agier proposes, which investigates the “weights of contexts in observed situations” (2016, p. 104), and the dynamic and unpredictable essence of the “habitus” that Bourdieu inserts into his theoretical framework on the relation between “structure” and “agency” (Bourdieu, 1984, 1988, 1993, 1998), will help us to overcome the rigidities of purely structuralist approaches when examining very fluid and dynamic human interactions, hitherto unexplored, such as those experienced in Greece in the last three years.

The emerging *concepts, ideas, values* and *attitudes* that sprang out of the analysis have been linked to the notion of “habitus”, not only because this concept can reveal the conscious or unconscious formation of differentiated “horizons for action” and exemplify the new divisions, “distinctions” (Bourdieu, 1984), “distances” and “border-settings” that the “growth of politicized humanitarianism on a global scale” (Papataxiarchis, 2018, p. 239) may entail, but also –and even more importantly– because we *hope* that a transformation in certain aspects of habitus *is possible*, if “creative resistances [...] relate to the ‘tradition of rebellion’ and ‘other worlds in movement’, as well as to ideas of anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial, and ecological global social movements” (Petropoulou, 2018, p. 2; see also McNay, 2000; Reay, 2004).

5. The context

Before we proceed with some notes about the methodology, which can be described as an “ethnography in unstable places” (Greenhouse 2002), we must sketch a brief account of the settings (social, spatial, political and emotional) in which this study took place.

- First, we have the “Moria” camp in Lesbos, which is a “Reception and Identification Centre” (RIC), or as it is widely known as “hotspot”, set up by the Greek Asylum Service. The “hotspot” approach was presented by the European Commission in May 2015, as part of a larger policy push termed the “European Agenda on Migration” (EC, 2015). The hotspots were conceived as the most effective tool in order to “swiftly sort those deemed eligible for international protection at the point of arrival on the northern shores of the Mediterranean, in Italy and Greece” (Tsilimpounidi & Carastathis, 2017, p. 406). Five “registration and identification centres” started operating in Greece, on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros, and Kos. The “Moria” camp in Lesbos (just 7 kilometers away from the capital Mytilene, on its north-western side) became a closed-type detention center, where all incoming immigrants are identified, registered and fingerprinted, and then divided to those “eligible” to apply for asylum and to those deemed “ineligible”, with the latter prepared for deportation, either to their countries of origin, or, since the bilateral EU-Turkey agreement went into effect (20 March 2016), for those who passed through that country, back to Turkey.

- Another examined site is the “Kara Tepe” camp, which is located about 2.5km to the northeast of Mytilene. The camp is managed by a special organization affiliated with the Municipality of Lesbos and is under the supervision of the UNHCR. The purpose of the camp is to provide temporary housing for asylum seekers as they await their registration processes. As of December 2017, there were 990 recorded refugees at the Kara Tepe camp (Makris, 2017). While Kara Tepe has been lauded for its infrastructure and community-like atmosphere, the camp still faces a great deal of challenges, such as the inadequate access to electricity, limited space and resources for food preparation, lack of targeted mental health interventions for youth, and poor access to legal advice. In August 2017, Kara Tepe's accommodation capacity was expanded by 56% to make room for up to 1250 persons (Kostaki, 2017).

- Lastly, the PIKPA's camp, or “Village of All Together”, is an open refugee camp in Mytilene. It is a former summer camp for children, which was unused and run-down and from 2012 is transformed to a self-organised, autonomous space run by volunteers and is built on the principle of solidarity. The main principals are that of no human is illegal and that borders should be open. Its main objective is to stand in active solidarity with the refugees and “fight against the barbaric European immigration policies” (Lesvos Solidarity, 2015). In parallel, it

raises awareness and does advocacy work around human rights violations and any acts of humiliation, violence and attacks against refugees. The crew works with local people to involve them in their work in order to promote community and sustainable action. The “Village of All Together” is a group of people that come from different social and cultural backgrounds (Alexiou, Tsavdaroglou & Petropoulou, 2016).

6. Methodology

Our study is a *case-study*, it is based on what is commonly called “interpretive research” epistemology and uses an ethnographic methodology. We find it useful for describing or answering questions about particular, localized occurrences or contexts and the perspectives of a participant group toward events, beliefs, or practices (Babbie, 2011, chap. 9; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, chap. 6). Especially when someone is trying to explore a complex phenomenon about which little is known, such as the refugee flows and the lives of the refugees themselves, we believe that an ethnographic approach illuminates the “invisibility of everyday life” (Erickson, 1986), by making the familiar strange, more examined, and better understood.

The field research combines *semi-structured interviews* with people working as education and support staff in the refugee sites described above, as well as *participant observation* at the same sites, by members of the research team. In this paper we will not focus on the material extracted from the participant observation process because this is on-going project, with many participants, whose work is under way, in a very dynamic – both socially, theoretically and methodologically—environment.

The *interviews* took place in Mytiline (the capital of Lesvos) in February of 2018, in a rather informal and relaxed way, in various cafes where the interviewees frequented and socialized with friends and colleagues. Although the noise was usually very high and at times disturbing, we believe that the creation of a relationship of *trust* between the researcher(s) and their informers is of paramount importance (Bryman, 2001, pp. 267-269). The people interviewed are *actors* in environments with a lot of noise, unusually high for the average citizen: refugee camps and shelters are full of people (adults and minors) who live in very cramped spaces, with few –if any—moments of privacy and lack of any technical means of isolating oneself in order to give a “structured”, time-paced and “ordered” interview. After all, any kind of (attempt to) write an account by an ethnographer or anthropologist of a situation (a person’s narrative, a description of an incident, an evaluation of an individual’s mental state, etc.) is a “fiction of writing”, in the sense that is “selective, synthetic or analytic, and responds to a certain convention of writing specific to the anthropological tradition” (Agier, 2016, p. 103). This does not mean that any obstruction of the investigator’s attention from what her/his interlocutor is saying is free of dangers regarding the “fidelity” of unveiling what the latter’s perception of reality might be, which is one of the cornerstones of the “hermeneutic” tradition, or what is generally called “qualitative epistemology” (Bryman, 2001, pp. 276-281).

The participants were:

1. A male mathematics teacher, who was working with an NGO at the “Kara Tepe” site;
2. A young female teacher, recent graduate of a Primary Education Department, who was working at the “Moria” RIC (hot-spot);
3. A female psychologist, who was working at the “PIKPA” site; and
4. A female education manager, who was working with an NGO at the “Kara Tepe” site.

All of them have been working with minors for more than 2 years in the island of Lesvos, not only in the camps but also in shelters and other welfare and/or education projects.

The main themes/issues covered during the interviews were the following (although, due to the nature of the interviews, some of them have not been adequately covered):

- The situation in the camps (problems, difficulties, actions)
- Results of the education programs in the last 2 years
- The education programs now (targets, structure, methodology)

- Problems and gaps in their relationship with the formal Greek education system
- Specific features of the intercultural education with refugees teenagers in a transit condition (most of them are unaccompanied minors)
- Relations with the Local Community
- The interviewees' policy proposals for amelioration of the educational provision for the refugee children.

The interviews were (digitally) recorded, with the fewest possible interruptions, and later transcribed. Taking down notes *before* and *after* the interviews (the so-called "diary of field observation") helped the team in the analysis of the material collected. However, note taking *during* the interviews was kept to a minimum level because it could be intrusive and make people nervous by continually emphasizing that they were being observed (Kvale, 1996). We believe that a good interviewer should develop trust and mutual respect, speak and act in ways that are non-threatening and cultivate a relatively neutral role, but also be compassionate and sympathetic towards the interviewee. That required a systematic reflection on the part of the interviewer and the cultivation of a climate of trust, despite the fact that sometimes that would extend the interviewing to lengths that proved exhausting for him (he was male).

There was also a need for cooperation between the interviewer and the person who would analyse the transcripts, so that a clear understanding of the coding conventions was observed, and gaps and omissions were corrected. The transcribed interviews were analysed using open- and selective-coding procedures. That is, apart from the main themes, we did not "invent" any other kind of "categories of analysis", and we let words (that is *concepts* and *notions* inscribed into these words) springing out of interviewees during their conversation with the interviewer (e.g. words such as "rights", "children", "refugees", "need" "education", etc.). The results of that *first-level analysis*, which included the most frequently used concepts were then grouped into a higher level of coding, through the combination of words into semantically important phrases and whole sentences, leading to the creation of a more general reference framework than the previous one (e.g. "refugee children have every right to be educated"). That reiterative, inductive process led to a conceptual "saturation", in other words, to a point at which the information gathered begins to be redundant.

7. Results

In presenting the findings of our study, the analytic schema regarding the various aspects of *habitus* proposed by D. Reay (2004) proved very helpful in reconstructing the way *habitus* was manifested in the interviewee's narratives. Reay (2004, pp. 432-435; also in 2015) in trying to unveil the psychosocial dimensions of the habitus, she offered four related aspects of it:

1. Habitus as *embodiment*, in the sense that habitus "is embodied, it is not composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions".
2. The relation between habitus and *agency*, since habitus is "potentially generating a wide repertoire of possible actions, simultaneously enabling the individual to draw on transformative and constraining courses of action".
3. Habitus is a *compilation of collective and individual trajectories*, since a "person's individual history is constitutive of habitus, but so also is the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of".

7.1. Habitus as embodiment

As we said earlier, "habitus" is the result of socialization and engenders in individuals a "disposition" below the level of consciousness to act or think in *certain ways* (Bourdieu, 1988, 1998; Reay, 2004, 2015). Bourdieu writes that it is expressed through durable ways "of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 70).

Formally, we have not been given any instructions ... we did what we had to do ... We thought that we were free to choose [the teaching methodology and the learning material]. (Female, young primary school teacher, working at the Moria's RIC)

Some of those *ways of thinking* and *acting* are not necessarily compatible with the knowledge, cultural norms, attitudes, behavioural pattern, tastes or needs of the learners (and their families). Some things are taken for granted by the respondents, and quite often the "different" is degraded as "abnormal", "illogical".

*I truly believe that **speaking English** is of paramount importance, because if you can't communicate..... Arabs were like... "Alibaba" and stuff.... Arabs were cursing Pakistanis... Pakistanis were hurling insults against the Arabs.... Afghans did not want the Pakistanis, Syrian did not want the Afghans!... It was funny in a way! No, we did not play this game... We tried to show them that **this is Europe**, open up your minds! (Female, young primary school teacher, working at Moria; authors' emphasis)*

*It's hard for most of those kids They don't even know how to sit on the chair... they jump around.... They have not developed **a proper school behaviour**... We're talking about **different people**, different **psychological characteristics**... It is important to integrate into the society....to **learn manners** ... (Male, mathematics teacher, working at Kara Tepe; authors' emphasis)*

Sometimes, the narratives of the interviewed educators unveil insurmountable legal, cultural and mental barriers and "distinctions" between the "local experts" and "mediators", on one hand, and the "foreigners", the "vulnerable", the "helpless", on the other. Certain actions on the part of the refugees are considered as "unthinkable", and their whole survival needs to undergo a continuous mediation, a kind of "filtering" of activities that are deemed "suitable" or not.

- If a [refugee] parent wishes to register his/her child to the local school, ... is this possible?

- No, no! Absolutely no! It must be done through the local educational organizations ... (Female, teacher / education manager at Kara Tepe)

Of course, this does not necessarily imply an "exclusionary" attitude, which is unconsciously manifested by the educators, *vis* the refugees. On the contrary, such a reaction is based on previous negative experiences and a conscious assessment of the odds of having something useful for the refugees done, within the existing cultural settings, which are full of prejudices & stereotypes for the immigrant and refugee population. In other words, the interviewed educators are not trying to patronize the refugees and make themselves "indispensable" to the latter. They seem to be honestly trying to do their best for the avoidance of the repetition of awkward situations that took place in the past, in which the refugees –and most importantly their offspring-- have experienced openly racist, hostile behaviour from local people.

We have tried to register those children to various school-preparatory classes, sports-clubs, private and public day-care centers, etc., The owners or managers of those facilities would simply not accept the children.... There were excuses about the way "other parents" would react to such a development.... We did not ask anything for free, we were willing to pay for their services.... There was a clearly racist attitude towards the refugees. (Female, teacher / education manager at Kara Tepe)

However, this taken-for-granted "vulnerability" and "helplessness" of the refugees, especially when it comes to issues of exercising their legal rights (e.g. the pay in exchange for services in the private sector), reinforces a certain layout of the "social space", with the local mediators occupying dominant and privileged positions, and the refugees staying at the fringes of the formal education system, where *only* through the (benevolent) *intervention* of the "philanthropists", the "solidarians" and the "activists", they may exercise their civil rights.

7.2. Habitus and agency

Habitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to “reproduce” the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively *unpredictable way*, (Bourdieu, 1990c, p. 87). This becomes clearly evident in the volunteer educators of our study, especially in the early stages of the educational interventions, since there had not been any organized state initiative.

*Our educational provision is for preschool children... It is based on the logic of the “forest school”, which originates from Scandinavia... The aim is **free expression, free play, respect of the nature**, ... the program is not standard... (Female, psychologist, working at PIKPA; authors’ emphasis)*

*I think that **we are lucky** to have these people here.... I believe that what’s good for them [the refugees] is equally good for our society.... this **mix of cultures**.... We are struggling for a school that is... how to say that nicely?... That is “better” than the existing ones. This would be, for me, **the ideal solution**... An “intercultural” model, not an “integrative” one... We should not think only how those people would be “integrated”, but how **we should all live together harmoniously** (Male, mathematics teacher, working at Kara Tepe; authors’ emphasis)*

For Bourdieu there are no explicit rules or principles that dictate behaviour, rather “the habitus goes hand in hand with vagueness and indeterminacy” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p.77).

We sat down and.... set our own targets ... We adopted a theatrical play as a teaching tool... Whoever was interested was free to join us.... Because everyday we deal with different people.... You taught the X child something useful, then, the next day you ended up teaching the Y child.... And there were more children coming everyday (Female, young primary school teacher, working at Moria)

However, there is always an emphasis on the constraints and demands that impose themselves on people (Reay, 2004, p. 433)

*Our target is to register to the formal education system... They need to **integrate**.... (Female, psychologist, working at PIKPA; authors’ emphasis)*

*Teaching is done on voluntary basis and there **is not any collaboration with the Ministry** [of Education]... However.... **we follow the Ministry’s curriculum**.... I teach mathematics according to the Maths curriculum and the **approved school textbooks**.... Our **job is to prepare them to go to school**. (Male, mathematics teacher, working at the Kara Tepe camp; authors’ emphasis)*

*There was that child... she was crying... just to get some loving.... And then we hugged to each other, and that was something nice... You start feeling like a family in there.... But, those kids were **not allowed to go out of the camp**, even to play football! It was such a mess!... (Female, young primary school teacher, working at Moria; authors’ emphasis)*

Despite the educators’ good intentions, through our relaxed conversations with them, it became evident that the dispositions making up their habitus are the products of opportunities and constraints framing their earlier life experiences. These experiences are “durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 54).

*For more information you should **ask the “boss”**, over there.... He knows better the legal framework. (Female, young primary school teacher, working at Moria; authors’ emphasis)*

We were trying to get those children into schools.... We managed to register 4 out of 20 persons... Generally speaking, the climate at schools was positive... Fortunately we found a very cooperative

teachers' council and a very effective head-teacher.... **That was not the case elsewhere...** Since there were no instructions from the Ministry (of Education), **the whole process was slow...** (Male, mathematics teacher, working at Kara Tepe; authors' emphasis)

7.3 Habitus as a compilation of collective and individual trajectories

According to Bourdieu, a person's individual history is constitutive of habitus, but so also is the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of. Habitus, within, as well as between, social groups, differs to the extent that the details of individuals' social trajectories diverge from one another (Bourdieu, 1990b), with many factors, such as *age, gender, race, educational experience, family wealth, place of origin, personal skills and talents* etc., intervening in the outcome of an individual's response to the various circumstances.

*Sometimes we decided to paint the room with colours... Then there were riots at the [Moria] camp, and nothing was finally done! Some people were not feeling comfortable with that... There was no sense of "regularity"... With me, it was ok... **I'm familiar with this kind of... say... mess!**...* (Female, young primary school teacher, working at Moria; authors' emphasis)

*Apart from my **general teaching experience**, I have been working for two years with unaccompanied children... There is a problem when we have new arrivals... The [volunteer] teacher has to "go back" and teach the basics to the newcomers. ... I'm **relatively new in this camp**... I don't know much... but... spending some time here made me realize that they [the refugee children] were feeling "entrapped"... living in a cage... The pressure was coming from outside... and from within, ... that is from their own families. They need to go one step further....* (Female, teacher / Education manager at Kara Tepe; authors' emphasis)

*To be a teacher is a very serious job.... Especially working as a teacher in compensatory and –most of all—**emancipatory education**.... This is not the same situation for all kids... It's not good to generalize, because each case is a special one.... **It depends on the student, it depends on the teacher... it depends on the head-teacher**.... It's a multi-factor issue.* (Female, psychologist, working at PIKPA; authors' emphasis)

However, because there are classes of experience there are also classes of habitus or the habitus of classes (Reay, 2004, p. 434), in the sense that individuals contain within themselves their past and present position in the social structure "at all times and in all places, in the forms of dispositions which are so many marks of social position" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 82). That is true for the educators, as well as the refugees themselves, and it becomes evident in their everyday encounters (whether or not the expressed views reflect a deep-seated attitude and a well-defined intention for action is another issue).

*They don't want... One of them [adolescent] spoke openly to me... I asked him "why you don't want to be here", and he said "I don't like school, I don't wish to continue". **This is their mentality**. They do not wish to stay here and learn something. They just want to go somewhere else. Their own parents do not permit them to participate....* (Male, mathematics teacher, working at Kara Tepe; authors' emphasis)

8. Discussion – Conclusions

In this study, we tried to sketch a general picture –among the many possible ones—of the educational situation of the refugee children on the island of Lesbos, with special reference to the informal activities taking place at three emblematic sites close to the capital city, Mytilene, in the last three years. Those activities and interventions are organized by voluntary and activist groups and by certain NGOs, depending on the availability of the educators, the movement of the refugee population, and the special –sometimes completely unforeseen

and unpredictable— circumstances created by the precarious condition of the refugees (e.g. the fluidity of their legal status), the processing capacities of formal sites (e.g. the RICs set up by the Greek Asylum Service), the existing humanitarian infrastructure on the island, the handling of the inflows from the Greek State’s competent authorities (the Ministry of Migration Policy, the Police and the Coast Guard) and the changes in the European Union’s immigration policy (see the March 2016 Agreement between the EU and Turkey, or the European Council’s conclusions on 28 June 2018).

By using an ethnographic approach, we contacted people who deal with informal educational activities on the island of Lesbos. More specifically, we organized semi-structured interviews with volunteers who offer informal courses to refugee children/adolescents (6-17 year old), as well as general support services to their families, at three different places around the city of Mytilene: 1) at an official RIC, 2) at a municipal host-camp, and 3) a refugee shelter run by NGOs and Solidarity groups.

Moria emerged –as expected– as a “closed”, alienating, precarious space, where the education is “privilege”, and not many alternative projects and initiatives can flourish. PIKPA and Karatepe, emerged (from the narratives) as more “open” and welcome spaces, with some participatory practices, where individual initiatives can make a difference. These differences –and there are many– need to be further elucidated, through an extension of our research to other sites, as well as to other actors in the field (i.e. refugees, educators, NGO and activist-organizations’ representatives, key policy-makers at local, regional and national level, etc.), and even a methodological enrichment, through the carrying out of participant observation on each site.

Although we clearly identified a differentiated approach to the “refugee issue” from what the average Greek citizen would adopt, and we recorded a truly humanitarian and solidarity interest of those people *vis* the refugees, it became evident, through our (semi-structured) interviews, that the volunteers’ choices are bounded by the framework of opportunities and constraints they find themselves in. The most important conclusion emerging from our ethnographic evidence is that no matter how “progressive” their general attitudes towards the “foreigners” might have been, what emerged is a manifestation of differentiated “horizons for action” between the “locals” (in this case, educators), on one hand, and the “foreigners” (in this case, refugees) on the other. We see that, despite the good intentions expressed by the interviewees, their narratives unveiled an “internalized framework that makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable” (Reay, 2004, p. 435). Even the dipole of “them” against “us” –even when that was not demeaning against the “them” side– is revealing of a “distinction” between two “incompatible”, opposites, which are in a constant contrast and conflict.

Although we saw differences of individual habituses among the interviewees (based on *gender, age, cultural capital, professional experience* etc.) and differentiated responses to similar tasks (e.g. how to handle the influx of a very high number of refugee children at a given time, or what kind of teaching interventions and material one might use, or what kind of spatial layout one would create within the given space and other limits of the examined sites), there was a sense of an unconscious reproduction of “cultural superiority” –and a taken-for-granted “inferiority” of the “other”, for that matter– ingrained in their habitus, during their daily interactions with the “vulnerable” refugees, especially the minors.

In other words, even these progressive and scrupulous educators, due to their socialization and their objective situation within the existing division of labour and social hierarchies (they, after all, have a secure ethnic identity, inviolable citizens’ rights, relative economic stability, shelter & food etc.) reproduce and quite often enforce new kinds of “borders” upon their (vulnerable) subjects. Although the examined individuals (i.e. the volunteer educators) do not necessarily ascribe to traditional notions of “national identity” or “national boundaries” that need to be protected from the “invading immigrants”, and they are more open to the idea of “border-crossing”, quite often –mostly unconsciously– they treat the refugees as “border dwellers”, those always in “transition”, reproducing that way new “divisions” and re-configuring new “border-scapes” within the traditional ones.

9. References

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