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Women and border policing at the edges of Europe

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ABSTRACT
While states around the world have responded to mass mobility by increasing border policing, our knowledge of the daily reality of that form of policing remains limited. How migrant women are policed has been particularly neglected. The political and practical difficulty of examining the context, process and experience of border control practices appears often to be insurmountable. This article contributes to filling some of the gaps in our knowledge by drawing on ethnographic data collected over a 12-month period in Greek immigration detention centres from 2011 to 2012. In it we examine the experience of policing and irregular entry across the Greek Turkey border – an entry-point to Europe that is routinely regarded as being in crisis. As we will demonstrate, border policing at this site is capricious and unpredictable. It is also highly racialised and gendered.

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Introduction

As states around the world have responded to growing numbers of people on the move by tightening their borders, strategies of border policing have assumed significant policy and political weight (Angel-Ajani 2003a; Green and Grewcock 2002; Pickering 2004). Through the securitisation of land and maritime borders, governments have sought to deter and disrupt the unauthorised mobility of people, often at the expense of their human rights. In so doing, they have reshaped policing, borders and sovereignty and the ways groups are included and excluded at national borders (Angel-Ajani 2003a; Goldsmith and Sheptycki 2007; Melossi 2003; Pickering 2006; Weber 2006).

Women and children now make up 60% of people on the move in Europe. However, we know little about the nature and ramifications of their experiences of crossing borders (although see Gerard 2014). What little we do know suggests that practices of border securitisation have created a more hostile and violent environment for women, leading to higher incidence of rape and sexual violence in militarised border zones (Carpenter 2006; Pickering 2011). Though scholars have speculated that women are less willing to play ‘cat and mouse’ with border policing agents or to make repeated attempts at crossing highly securitised borders (Richter, Taylor, and Yúnez-Naude 2007), women, particularly those who are seeking asylum, remain vulnerable (Crawley 1999; McKay 2003).

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In a relatively short period, borders and the control of irregular mobility have moved from a peripheral to a more pressing concern for criminologists in Europe, North America and Australia (see, inter alia, Aas 2011; Aas and Bosworth 2013; Andreas 2003; Bosworth 2008; Bosworth and Guild 2008; Fassin 2011; Gerard and Pickering 2012; Grewcock 2011; Pickering and Ham 2014; Pickering and Weber 2006; Weber 2006; Weber and Pickering 2011). However, we are still building an empirical base from which to understand the micro politics of irregular migration and border control practices. On the one hand, official governmental discourse presents geographical divisions as fixed and defensible. On the other hand, a growing body of interdisciplinary academic research has comprehensively disrupted such accounts, redirecting attention to those who move across borders and the ways they experience border policing, as well as to the perspective of the security forces and their own conceptualisation of border control (see for example Aas 2005; Pickering 2005; Pickering and Weber 2013; Salter 2007; Sanchez 2016; Weber and Bowling 2004; Wilson and Weber 2002; Wonders 2007). Empirical work in the US and Europe has been instrumental to this discussion, highlighting the multifaceted and diverse nature of border control (Bigo and Guild 2005; Pallister-Wilkins 2015; Vaughan-Williams 2012; Williams 2015).

In this paper, we contribute to the scant body of applied research in this field by offering an analysis of accounts drawn from a range of migrant and asylum-seeking women and border police in Greece in the central holding facility for migrants in Athens and the Athens airport detention centre. Interviews were conducted over a 12-month period in 2011–2012 by one of the authors in the first site as a research officer and in the second when she was working for a Greek NGO.[1] While the Ministry of Interior and Public Protection had overall responsibility for immigration issues and detention facilities, the Hellenic Police approved this research. In negotiation with the relevant authorities, we were given full access to interview staff and detainees and permission to move freely throughout the centres. Detainees were recruited through the social service, and in consultation with detention officers. Staff respondents were chosen based on their experience of having worked both at the border and in detention facilities.[2]

Below, we set their testimonies against the political and social context of Greece and the European Union (EU). By focusing on the micro politics of producing, performing and crossing borders we highlight the incoherence and contradictions between prevailing logics of border control (Salter 2008). In so doing, we offer a grounded critique of border control policies in Greece that moves beyond prevailing theoretical conceptions of the border as a state of exception. Through rich, empirical description, we reflect the concrete nature of current politics. These are not sites or people outside the law, but rather places and populations whose existence and options reflect and reinscribe global patterns of racial and gender inequality. Border control, the testimonies of our research participants remind us, articulates and relies on racialised and gendered understandings; while the women seek out alternatives, the border guards deny them and turn them away. By comparing the women's accounts of their decisions and experiences with the views of those charged with enforcement and oversight of border control, we reveal the intersectional nature and effect of border crossing reflecting on the role such matters play in nationality, citizenship and belonging (Bosworth, Parmar, and Vázquez 2017).

Greece in fortress Europe

The external frontier of the EU between Turkey and Greece is made up of a 203 km land border in the Evros region in the North and a sea border on the Aegean in the South. Characterised by multiple, alternative points of crossing, as well as by sustained flows of people who have resisted the intensification of border control policies, the Greek–Turkish border has, since 2009, been dramatically affected by the regional tumult caused by forced displaced people trying to find safety or a better life in Europe. In 2015, for instance, for which we have the most complete statistics, it was estimated that more than 850,000 people crossed from Turkey into Greece by land and sea. Sea arrivals, specifically, increased that year by an astonishing 1075.3%, earning the label from the UNHCR of a 'maritime refugee crisis'. More than 85% of those arriving in Greece were from countries experiencing war and conflict, principally Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. Women and children accounted for more than 60%.

In late January 2016, the EU gave Greece a three-month ultimatum to prevent arrivals from Turkey. Failure, it warned, would vacate Greece's membership of the borderless Schengen area. Austria and several Balkan countries began building rows of fences and FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), in March 2016, sealed its southern border with Greece. In response, Greece expanded its detention and reception capacity. At the time of writing, there are more than 50 emergency reception sites and 5 hotspots, as well as a number of informal sites,[3] operating with capacity for around 60,000 people. In addition to these new facilities, Greece continues to use a number of pre-removal detention centres, older dedicated detention sites, and numerous border guard and police stations.

Detention has been a core aspect of border policing in the country for a number of years, as subsequent governments have sought to make Greece an unfriendly destination for migrants and secure its borders.[4] The emergent policies, enacted under conditions of severe economic privation, seek to deter migrants through fencing and gatekeeping (Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini 2011), and by making detention facilities unlivable. The government also operates a formal deportation system.

The investment in safeguarding Greece's porous borders was completed by the 2012 erection of a 10.5 km fence along the most transited part of its land border with Turkey. That same year saw the deployment of 2000 additional border guards along the Evros river under temporary Operation Aspida, making the Greek-Turkish border the 'centre of gravity' of Frontex's operations.[5] These measures proved effective in discouraging immigrants or smugglers from this particular route. They did not stem the flow of arrivals however. Instead, migrants were forced on far more dangerous sea-crossings to the Greek islands, with a resultantly increased death toll in the Aegean (Pallister-Wilkins 2015).

Resourceful Hellenic police and coastguard have employed, over the years, a number of other, more informal techniques to control the borders with Turkey, creating a chain of transnational exploitation. Though it is not easy to document these cases and the scale with which they occur, testimonies collected by human rights organisations and NGOs concerning illegal deportations and push-backs suggest that these practices have been routine, systematic, brutal and, above all, long-standing (HRW 2008;; ProAsyl 2007). In 2013, for example, Amnesty International (2013) reported that coastguard officials were puncturing inflatable boats or otherwise disabling them before setting them adrift towards the Turkish coast. Five years earlier, Human Rights Watch had alleged Greek officials simply deposited migrants at the Turkish borders, outside the readmission agreement signed by the two countries in 2001, which has never been fully implemented (Human Rights Watch 2008).

In addition to hardening its external border, Greece has sought to make conditions inside detention centres act as a form of deterrence. As the Head of Hellenic Police advised his officers, 'we have to make their lives miserable, otherwise they will be under the impression that coming to Greece they will be free to do what they want'.[6] Faced with the prospect of prolonged stay inside a Greek detention centre under deplorable conditions, this officer hoped that irregular migrants would not make the perilous journey to Greece.

In response to the 'persistent lack of action of action to improve the situation', the Council of European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment took the 'exceptional' measure of making a 'Public Statement Concerning Greece' in relation to Article 10 of the European Convention on Torture and Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment[7]: 'Despite significant numbers of irregular migrants entering Greece via its eastern land and sea borders over a period of years', it observed, 'no steps were taken to put in place a coordinated and acceptable approach as regards their detention and treatment' (para 3 of the statement) (CPT 2011). This is not the first time that Greece has been publically castigated for the conditions of its detention facilities. Numerous NGO reports cite overcrowding, poor conditions, and lack of access to assistance, including legal, social and medical support (Amnesty International 2010; HRW 2013).

Police aim to arrest and detain all new arrivals, including those who claim asylum, victims of torture and human trafficking, disabled persons, pregnant women and minors (see Pickering and Weber 2013). Thus, in 2013, as part of a massive national policing operation known as Xenios Zeus,[8] the Ministry of Interior authorised daily police 'sweep operations' to arrest and detain all irregular migrants in Greek territory. As former Minister of Citizen's Protection, Nikos Dendias put it: 'Our aim is that every illegal migrant, unless the competent authorities decide that he is entitled to international protection, will be detained until he is returned to his home country'.[9]

Following their arrest, everyone was issued with an automatic deportation order without a hearing or any consideration of protection obligations. Such deportation orders were and remain rarely enforced, however, because most irregular migrants lack the travel documents not only to enter but also to leave the country legally. Thus, only one quarter (24.5%) of the 491,411 orders to leave issued by the Greek authorities between 2008 and 2013, were enforced. Consequently, the number of arrestees soon exceeded the number of detention places available. In response, the government engaged in a large-scale investment in pre-removal detention establishments to increase the return rate.

Despite all this policy activity and investment in tough policing measures, the current refugee influx serves as a stark reminder that the 'erection of metaphorical and actual walls and the desire to stop irregular migration do not seem capable of repressing migration movements' (Tsianos and Karakayali 2010). The Greek state has managed neither to curb arrivals nor to remove the majority of those subject to deportation orders. Why then, does the state remain so wedded to this strategy? And what are some of its effects. These questions animate the next sections. In them, as we will demonstrate, women offer a complex range of reasons for and accounts of their migration, while staff fall back on familiar racialised and gendered tropes. Together, their testimonies illuminate the intersectional nature of migration and its control (Lewis 2013; Smith and Marmo 2011).

Why women migrate

> You are obliged to work for your kids. We all do it for the kids. I talk to them and I realize I miss moments of their lives. I send them shoes and one day it was size 39 and now it is 41. You miss a lot. (Fieldnotes, February 2012; Georgian woman to an officer)

All the women in this project explained their irregular entry into Greece as the result of their limited legal options. Unskilled and from the global south, they were unable to obtain permission to enter for the purpose of work or to reunite with their family members. In contrast, they could access smuggling networks without much difficulty. Those seeking protection, encountered an asylum system that, at the time of research, had an acceptance rate of 1% and was still processing applications submitted in 2006.[10]

In any case, the legal framework of the Greek system was of little interest to our research participants as few of those who entered clandestinely wished to remain in Greece. Like more recent arrivals today, most hoped to travel north towards family, friends and greater job opportunities. France, Germany, the U.K. and Scandinavia were their desired destinations. Greece was, for them, a transit country.

The women who took part in the study came from seven countries: Nigeria, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Eritrea, Somalia, Iraq and Cape Verde. Two thirds had dependent children, all of whom had remained in their country of origin. The average respondent's age was 30 years old. Some had been in Greece for as long as three years while others had been arrested upon arrival a few days earlier. All had travelled as part of a group across the border even as other parts of the journey were undertaken alone.

In explaining the cause of their irregular entry into Europe, the women's accounts varied by nationality. Those from Eritrea, Somalia, Cape Verde and Iraq described circumstances relating to war and political persecution, while Georgians sought economic opportunities. Nigerians and women from the Dominican Republic described political and complex social problems as motivating factors. While we make no claims that our sample is representative, these distinctions in the women's accounts offer a useful reminder of the heterogeneity of the migrant population; a factor that draws into question the unitary solution often inherent in muscular border control strategies.

Wherever they were from, all the women mentioned gender violence and domestic responsibilities as factors that contributed to their decision to leave their place of birth. Those who had fled political violence had been threatened with or had experienced sexual violence before or after their departure. Most women from Africa and Iraq talked about the deaths of male family members; without a male head of household, they faced significant economic responsibilities in supporting their family especially their dependent children. In line with other research, all were in search of work (see, for example, Sassen 1999).

Women from Somalia and Eritrea sought to escape ongoing conflict in their countries of origin. However, they too, had concerns related to their economic survival. Sarah explained:

> I wanted to leave because the government is a problem and my husband is a soldier and I faced too many problems because of that and there is no job for me. For all this I wanted to go out. And from Eritrea I walked to Sudan. (Sarah)

Threats or experience of sexual violence compounded women's victimisation, as did their experiences of exploitation. Often, quite basic choices in life around relationships and living conditions had been seriously compromised. Fola had left Nigeria, she explained, because, as a woman, she was denied inheritance and was in danger of being married against her will:

> I don't have a mother, I don't have a father. I have a cousin and this cousin is treating us bad. All my father's property he collected from us. Many things like that. Before we see food he eats it. So I decided maybe to go find work and live. I don't have mother or father to say to me go or no go. Even my uncle don't know when I left. He wants me to marry one old man, one old man because he has money. I can't marry someone for money. (Fola)

Women, especially those without a male head of household, also came to Greece seeking economic opportunities to support their family and children. Many talked about being unable to fulfil the role of mother and provider in the absence of breadwinners. They had to migrate to provide for the children they had left behind:

> I left because of the economic crisis. This is my problem. I worked for seven years in a hospital but if you get 35 Euros a month you can't do anything with your life. And when your kids grow up what are you going to do? My husband died and my children are married. I have to do something to survive because I don't get the pension. I can't go forward with a chicken and a goat in the village. (Mzia, Georgia)

In contrast to other accounts in refugee studies which often portray women as being swept up in forced migration journeys (Pickering 2011), our participants claimed that the decisions to undertake the illicit journey were their own. They had all identified Europe as a destination themselves, and had been determined to travel there. Although many described circumstances where family and others had attempted to dissuade them from making the journey (Andersson 2014), most were, at least initially, facilitated by family members or close connections, with the *preliminary* arrangements made on their behalf by a member of their extended domestic group.

All were facilitated by multiple actors who assisted them at different points in their journey. Charges were high, ranging between 6000 and 20,000 euros for the trip. All but one had paid that money before embarking on their journey or in instalments along the way. Only one woman reported paying after arrival in Greece. All said that their facilitators made the detailed decisions and arrangements about how and when the border would be crossed.

In terms of their knowledge of border control prior to their journey the women fell into four distinct groups. Those from Cape Verde, Nigeria and Dominican Republic neither knew what would happen at the border, nor understood the consequences of having no papers or fraudulent documentation. They had not even comprehended that they would have irregular status. While participants from Eritrea and Somalia had some idea that entering Greece without documents would be difficult, they appeared to have no specific details about what would happen upon arrival. In contrast, women from Iraq had a more developed understanding of the difficulties they would face, including those seeking protection, while finally, the Georgian nationals in our sample had made repeated attempts to cross, and thus were fully cognizant of what awaited them.

Understandably, those with little or no knowledge of what would happen at the border as well as women seeking protection, fleeing conflict and violence, reported that border protection was not a consideration in their decisions about whether, how and when to cross the border. In fact, most women found border protection almost unfathomable. They found it difficult to reconcile, in other words, why and how they had come to Greece with their treatment upon arrival. Detention was not what they had expected.

In other contexts, it has been contended that international familial and ethnic networks furnish anticipatory flight with high levels of information about exactly what will happen and when (Havinga and Böcker 1999). In Greece, however, where there is intense border protection in a state experiencing an ongoing number of arrivals that strain capacity, alongside significant, popular fears of immigration and unprecedented EU resources dedicated to securing the border, there nonetheless remains great uncertainty and unpredictability in policy outcome. Among those we interviewed, only those whose country of origin was geographically proximate to Greece had a basic working knowledge of what to expect at or soon after crossing the border. As a result, they were the only ones who had considered the likely consequences in their decision-making. Even this group, said they were deceived by their facilitators about particular risks of their journey, the challenge of finding work and barriers to their onward mobility.

All women turned to operators (smugglers) because of dangers they would face travelling unaccompanied. ‘The boat took us to a Greek village’, Irema recalled. ‘And we were 6 Georgians. And we had another 2 guys who took us here. It can’t be that six women can travel by themselves. Someone has to be with … the other two were the people who do this business.’ Only women from Georgia referred to their facilitators in criminal terms, often calling them ‘mafia’. Everyone else described chains of actors with varying relations to one another.[11] In their accounts, different people performed distinct roles from the country of origin to arrival at the Greek border.

Women faced multiple risks on their journey including sexual violence. Crossing the border was physically difficult; their bodies, as Banerjee (2010, xvi) evocatively writes, were pitted ‘against the border and the superstructure of state security’. Evros River and overcoming Greece’s border fortifications we particularly difficult. As Liyana, who had travelled from the Dominican Republic, described matters:

> I wanted to come to Greece because some persons had come here, some friends and they didn’t tell me that it would be dangerous to come here. When you come here, they don’t tell you that you are going to pass through the mountains, that it’s going to be dangerous for your life, that you have to cross a river … When we got to the river, they put us on a boat and they left and they said that when you arrive on Greek soil you have to walk. In the river I lost everything, I was without clothes. And then they arrested me in Orestiada. (Liyana)

Despite such dangers, women repeatedly reported a willingness, or perhaps more accurately an expectation and capacity, to suffer in their bid to forge a new life.

> Chiora: … they told me I was going to hide in a bus for two hours
>
> Interviewer: In the bus? Where, in the luggage compartment?

> Chiora: Not there. They had somewhere else. Under the chairs and above the wheels like (pause) what is that (pause) like a coffin. And in reality I was there for 24 hours.

At first, most of the women considered the border police to be part of their rescue following dangerous river and land crossings. As such, they even sought out security personnel to bring to an end their journey and the physical risks and pains they were enduring. They did not initially perceive the border police, in other words, as part of a coercive regime designed to repel their journey or to disrupt and deter the chains of facilitators that brought them to the border. Instead, they considered them to be people who would bring their *physical* risks to an end.

It was only once women succeeded in their clandestine entry that their views of the police began to change. Few women understood the legal arrangements governing their stay in Greece. Only some had previously heard of the white paper[12] notice for 30 days that is distributed at the border. It was with some surprise then, that they discovered that the Greek police were not figures of rescue, but rather personnel who would deport them. Despite their putative humanitarian role, they could not be called upon for assistance, even by those women who had experienced criminal victimisation (Aas and Gundhus 2015; Pallister-Wilkins 2015; Williams 2015). To understand this gap, we turn next to the officers' views of women migrants.

Race, gender and border control

Unlike the nuanced accounts the women provided about their motivations for crossing borders and the ways they journeyed, the border police overwhelmingly made sense of irregular migrants and their decision-making in simplistic, binary terms of race and gender. The detainees, in their view, were both inadequate women and the racialised embodiment of failing cultures. The dynamics of border control and irregular migration was conveniently washed aside in staff testimonies by energetic and dogmatic claims about the women's naivety and their criminal, sexually deviant and sub-human nature.

For some officers, the women had simply been exploited.[13]

> They get fooled. Before they arrive here they are told that they are going to work in houses and such and they end up on the street. They don't know what they are doing and where they are going. Women don't have an idea. (Ivan)

The criminality of women, in this view, sprang from their inherent gullibility. Like children, they merely did what men told them to do. The best way of managing them, one officer made clear, was, therefore to be firm. 'When they resist, I shout at them and they stop', Jacinta asserted.

Although this same officer claimed that 'women are more innocent' than men, most of her colleagues perceived their charges in more negative terms as deviants and sub-humans. As others have found elsewhere, female detainees were perceived through a racialised prism as morally and intellectually distinct from and inferior to (Greek) citizens (Angel-Ajani 2003b; Brennan 2004; Jiwani 2005; Kapur 2005; Scambler 2007). In this narrative, race and gender delegitimise women as transnational migrants, especially in the face of increasing border control. Often cast in nationalist terms (Bosworth 2017), this view of the detainees obscured the global inequalities, regional conflict or trauma that the women emphasised in their accounts of migration.

Interviews for this research were conducted at a time when the Greek state was in crisis and the government had broadly accepted it was unable to effectively provide for sizeable groups of its own citizens. Under such conditions of austerity, the provision of shelter to undocumented migrants was considered by the border police as a marker of a civilised state in which Greeks (us) were pitted against uncivilised masses (them). ‘They are not able to freely move around, they can’t talk to anyone, they just come to Greece and become slaves’, one officer claimed. ‘So, in a way, in here they have a better life, because we feed them and provide them with accommodation.’ (Fieldnotes, December 2011)

In their work with detainees, officers drew on gender binaries, in which women were interpreted as biologically difficult and inherently untrustworthy. ‘I don’t think there are any differences with men’, Ivan began, ‘only as far as the female nature is concerned. For example, the other day we didn’t have enough money to buy sanitary towels so some women had a problem. We get by though’. His female colleague, Xenia, was more forceful. ‘They are sly’, she asserted. ‘not as women from these countries, [but] as women in gender’. This gendered interpretation of women’s nature applied to herself, Xenia hastened to add, noting with pride that

> we are sly too. In general all women are sly so you have to treat them like this … Women used their female nature to get what they wanted from men. She is not going to do the same to me. I am a woman and I am sly too. We have the same slyness as a sex. I know how they are thinking and I can act accordingly. Of course the same applies when I am dealing with transvestites.

Above all, staff spoke of female detainees as exemplars of failed or unacceptable cultures (Volpp 2000). In terminology reminiscent of the French colonists depicted by Frantz Fanon (1963) in *Wretched of the Earth*, the officers viewed (certain) detainees as little more than animals. Outspoken Xenia tried to explain. ‘Iraqis have a certain mentality’, she began,

> that women have to be animals. I’m not saying this to offend them but this is their way of thinking because of their religion, their culture, as a country, as a people. Women have to animals, be uneducated, not knowing what’s going on around them, have babies all the time … I mean women are reproduction machines and nothing else. And I can’t say they are very loving towards their kids because these women have learned that from the age of 13, 14 -when they get sold, because marriage there is a transaction- that you have children and nothing else, that your husband treats you inhumanely and that he has another 15 women who he treats the same way. If you watch them carefully, because I do in order to assess their behaviour towards the baby. They are very cold and it’s not their fault they are like this, it’s their upbringing. If you have heard what they do to girls’ genitals in these countries … I believe that this is what makes them act inadequately. (Xenia)

Such anthroporacialism, justified through culturalist narratives, had deeply corrosive effects and justified the women’s maltreatment; animals do not deserve to be treated as humans. It also hived off sections of the population from others, creating a hierarchy of deserts and culpability.

The racialised nature of such matters was particularly evident in the narratives of criminality many officers attributed to some of the women in their care. While the women did not talk about their intention to work in the sex industry, or of transactional sex,[14] officers routinely demonised and ridiculed them on this basis and evidently perceived them as criminals due to their assumed or actual involvement in sex work. Sex work was *always* associated with deviance despite sex work being legal and regulated in Greece. As Angel-Anjani described many years ago in Italy, this perception was intimately bound up with racialisation of immigrant women and a reliance on cultural stereotypes (Angel-Ajani 2003b). Nigerian women were particular targets.

> Nigerians create more problems … They are into voodoo and stuff and you can't communicate with them. Moreover they have a different mentality, a street mentality. They come here and become prostitutes and they become harder than other women. Basically they are men. (Ivan)

A perceived willingness to engage in sex work was seen as fitting with the cultural othering of women from some countries. Being seen as a sexual agent was evidence of a bad culture. Yet, for other border police, sex work, and its normalisation by some women in their charge, was proffered as evidence of their inherent deviance that not only disrupted acceptable gendered performance but distorted broader (Greek) gender relations.

> You see other women, for example, Russian or Ukrainian, mainly from the eastern block, that come here and they know that they come here for prostitution; they are not opposed to it. There are many women who support their decision very much. No matter how weird we think it is. I mean when I said to one girl that 'you are 18 years old, how can you let all these men use your body?', her answer was 'this is my job, like yours is to be a police officer. I am serving people'. Here we consider it as humiliation. They openly say that they don't do any harm; 'like you are a policewoman, I am a prostitute. Who is going to do this job?' They don't think of it as being awful, they think it's normal. And this is how they get their men. (Xenia)

As the officers' testimonies made clear, women who irregularly cross borders are doubly stigmatised, first for their contravention of gender-based expectations and second, for their breach of the border. This pattern broadly confirms decades of feminist criminological research on women's offending as being seen as 'doubly bad' especially for women of colour (Carlen 2013; Chesney-Lind 2006; Chesney-Lind and Eliason 2006; Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999). Ironically, women's efforts to meet changing gender expectations in their countries of origin of familial obligation, especially regarding financially providing for their families, does not factor into such assessments. There is no attempt to recuperate narratives of good motherhood to explain what drives some women to seek out financial security through insecure migration and illicit labour. Women's own narratives of providing for their children and aging parents were unable to disrupt scripts of failed gender and culture at the border.

As Brennan (2004) has cogently argued, even though migrant women have freed themselves of the constraints of traditional gender ideologies in home communities, once they migrate they often face a new set of gendered expectations. These expectations profoundly shape their interaction with border control. 'We respect women because they are women', Dimitris asserted.

> Women come in usually with big groups with their kids and husbands. Young girls go straight on the streets. They make them prostitutes. Even though women just want to be with their families. They don't have a choice. Once they leave their country the biggest torture begins. (Dimitris)

Conclusion

This research sought to bridge the gap that Liisa Malkki (1997) identified between the ways women migrants are seen by others and how they view themselves. We are considering this gap at a critical time in the European project of border control during a time of heightened awareness of trafficking, particularly into the sex industry. These concerns dominate debates around women's irregular mobility into Europe and have resulted in the construction of irregularly mobile women as victim or potential victim, often with a concomitant loss of agency and voice.

The extant literature indicates the ways women's bodies are considered racially and sexually dangerous as they approach national borders – primarily to themselves but also to nation states and are hence increasingly rejected or immobilised (see, inter alia, Brennan 2004; Kapur 2005; Lee 2007; Scambler 2007; Vanwesenbeeck 2001). In short, women of particular ages and races, travelling in specific configurations often have a reverse burden of proof to show they are not, or will not be, a victim of trafficking (Pickering and Ham 2014). However, our research in Greece suggests the sexualisation and racialisation of women extends well beyond these prevailing European concerns.

Border control not only refers to the power to reject irregular border crossing, technologically, legally or physically. It also captures the capacity to reject on moral grounds those who have crossed borders (Pallister-Wilkins 2015). In this task, ideas of race and gender offer crucial resources for the regulation of mobility. In the case of women crossing the Greece–Turkey border, border police justified their actions and the harsh institutions in which they worked by appealing to cultural stereotypes and norms. In turn, such beliefs allowed them to turn away from those in their care and overlook their suffering.

Traditional gendered and racial ideologies uphold and legitimate the spaces created by the hyper-politics of border control. Gender roles operated as a drag on women's international migration, even when it was irregular, delegitimising them as transnational migrants. The sorting of desirable from undesirable migrants at the border is heavily invested in 'civilising' tropes that are little more than racialised and gendered moralities. Border control has provided another, potent opportunity not only to reject, but to demean and diminish racially othered women. The complexity of women's survival and their labour fade in the spaces of border control. Yet there are few indications that women's irregular border crossing will change as a result. For women, these spaces are not the focus of their survival. Yet, officials keep their individual and collective racial and gendered stare fixed upon the woman and the border. This incongruence is surely unsustainable.

Notes

1. At the time of the research, the central holding facility for migrants in Athens was the only centre that held men, women and children in the city and was the main detention site that people from the border were transferred to. Most detention officers employed there had been seconded to the Evros border police as border officers. No independent academic research in it had previously been permitted.
2. Border officers are regular police officers on rotation of maximum three months because it is very difficult to find people who are locally established at border locations or who would be willing to relocate there for a longer stretches of time.
3. http://rrse-smi.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=d5f377f7f6f2418b8ebadaae638df2e1.

4. Integrated Program for Border Management and Combating Illegal Immigration presented on 07.09.11 to the Cabinet by the former Minister of Citizen Protection, Christos Papoutsis (see http://www.minocp.gov.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang=&perform=view&id=3790&Itemid=513).
5. The policing of external borders has often been referred to as high policing – being driven by national security and international relations concerns (see Andreas 2010) and has been set against so called 'low policing' routinely regarded as the bread and butter policing we know and love in criminology. However, the Hellenic policing of the Greece–Turkey border does not neatly conform to this classification. Primarily because there is not a border policing apparatus clearly distinct from the civilian police – but rather they are largely one and the same. The same police are involved with the detection, interception, arrest and processing of irregular migrants at the physical border, their summary return to Turkey or entry into the asylum system, the arrest and round up of undocumented non-citizens, the operation of detention centres and deportation processes. The policing of irregular migrants is very much seen as part of the ordinary criminal policing continuum.
6. http://news247.gr/eidiseis/koinonia/arxhgos-el-as-gia-metanastes-na-toys-kanoyme-to-vio-aviwto.2561326.html.
7. The CPT has resorted to this action only another five times in the past; in 1992 and 1996 to Turkey and to Russia in 2001, 2003 and 2007 for the situation in Chechnya.
8. Named with savage irony, in reference, to the ancient Greek God Zeus to symbolise hospitality to and patronage of foreigners (Human Rights Watch 2013).
9. http://www.yptp.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang=GR&perform=view&id=4736&Itemid=579.
10. The newly established Asylum Service, which is the first Independent Authority dealing with asylum claims in Greece as provided for in P.D. 113/2013 and has Regional Offices inside and outside of Attica, began operating on 7th June 2013. The new Asylum Service is responsible for all new asylum applications and it was expected to fasten the asylum procedure and reduce the already existing backlog in the old system run by the Police. In 2015, there were still 23,324 applications pending from the old system. However, the acceptance rate has been risen up to 30.7% (for more on this http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece).
11. This could be attributed to what Janet Roitman (2006) has termed as the 'ethics of illegality'; that is, a space of ethics that is construed by people on the move, in which the use of illicit modes of travel (i.e. smuggler, fake documents, etc.), otherwise criminalised by European authorities, is normalised.
12. The white paper is an administrative notice written only in Greek which gives them 30 days to file for asylum or leave the country (HRW 2008).
13. Similarly, Pallister-Wilkins (2015) argues that the policing of groups who are both at risk and a risk (Aradau 2004), who are in need of both care and control, is a constant feature of the border police's daily work in Greece.
14. Transactional sex refers to the exchange of sex for material support, usually in the form of a relationship.

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