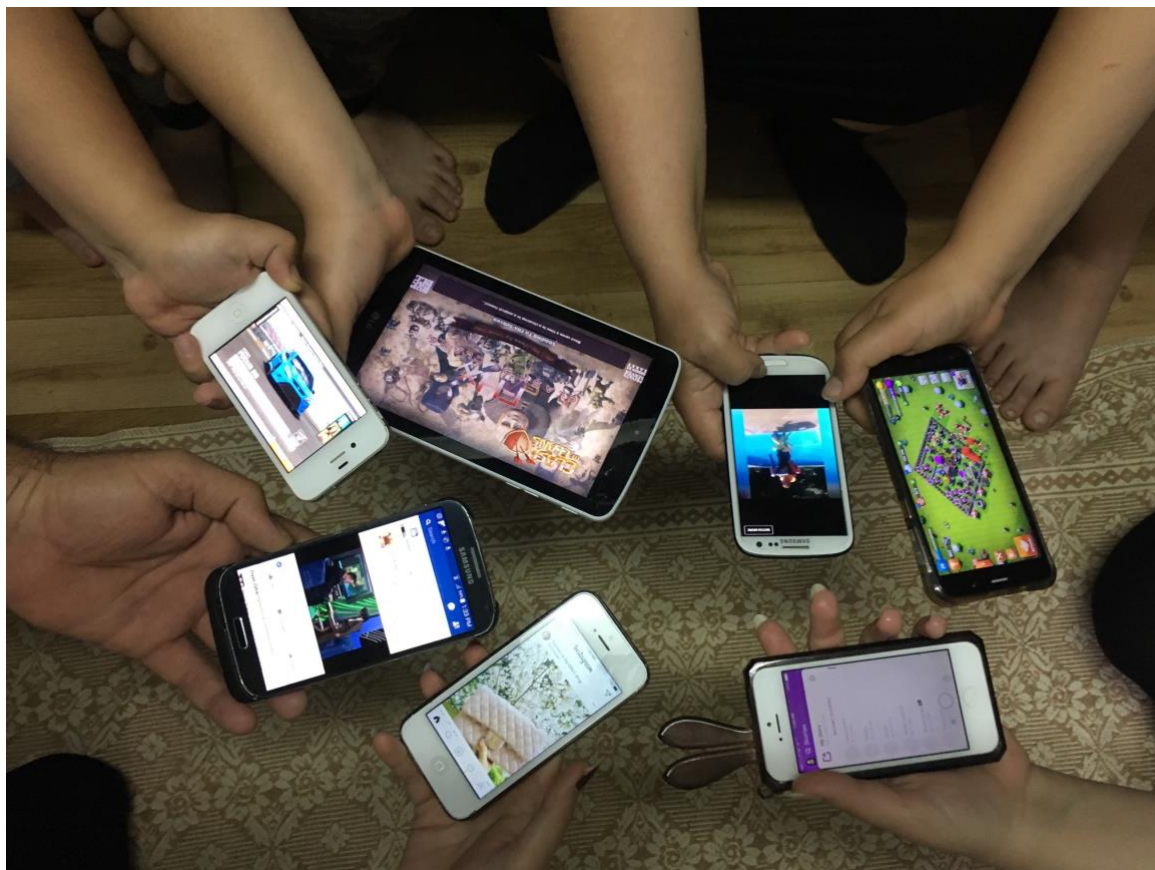# Place, time, and smartphones:
refugee women affectively "making do"

A feminist research project exploring the situated and contested experiences
of refugee women waiting in Greece

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Works Cited

Abstract

The majority of the literature on media and migration focuses on representation and technology, both in the context of migration journeys, as well as border security. With some exceptions (see, for example, Baldassar et al., 2016; Leurs, 2016; Madianou, 2016a; Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016), scholarship rarely addresses the affective entanglements of migrant digital practices. When it is explored, and includes gender in its analysis, it is often in the context of the "feminisation of migration" (Madianou, 2016b). However, "mothering" at a distance is not applicable in the context of the current migrant crisis. It does not address the situated and contested experiences of women in refugee camps who are waiting to travel onwards, often with their children but without other family members. This feminist research project centres a reflexive (Sultana, 2007) and vulnerable (Page, 2017) methodology, where questions of ethics, power, and positionality are regularly negotiated in the field, and represented justly in the writing and textual analysis of that fieldwork. Using emotionality as an entry point, this thesis explores refugee women's smartphone use and gendered affect across place and time. It does so by unpacking affective and embodied empirical data gathered at a refugee camp in mainland Greece. Additionally, this thesis extends existing theories on waiting as affect (for example, Twigt, 2018), and proposes "making do" (Certeau, 1984) as a tactic for negotiating the anxieties and ambivalences produced through protracted experiences of waiting.

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Introduction

"But when you leave your family and you feeling it's maybe dangerous, you are feeling you are not here. You are here, but you are not here. You are safe, but you are there."

<div align="right">– Rania</div>

In March 2011, pro-democracy demonstrations began in the city of Deraa following the arrest and torture of several teenagers who painted revolutionary slogans against President Bashar al-Assad's regime. These demonstrations were further galvanised by the Arab spring. The government responded with the use of deadly force, triggering nationwide protests demanding Assad's resignation. Opposition supporters began arming themselves and violence escalated throughout the country. By 2012, the country was in the midst of a brutal civil war – Assad and his allies against various opposition supporters. As of 2017, there are 13.5 million people in need in Syria, 6.3 million of whom are internally displaced, and 4.5 million in hard-to-reach and besieged areas (UNHCR, n.d.-b). Over 5.3 million Syrians (as of 16 November) have fled the country as refugees (UNHCR, n.d.-c). 91% of Syrian refugees, some 4,921,298 people, live in urban, peri-urban, or rural centres. The remaining 9%, or 458,346 people, live in refugee camps (UNHCR, n.d.-c). 5 million Syrian refugees are registered in just five countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt (UNHCR, n.d.-c). Between April 2011 and September 2017, there have been 987,571 Syrian asylum applications in Europe, the majority to Germany and Sweden (UNHCR, n.d.-c).

"But when you leave your family and you feeling it's maybe dangerous…"

Based on data from the Missing Migrants Project, IOM estimates at least 33,761 migrants are reported to have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean between 2000 and 2017 (as of 30 June), although these numbers are likely much higher (IOM, 2017). In 2017, 3119 migrants were reported as dead or missing in the Mediterranean Sea. 172,301 people survived the journey (UNHCR, n.d.-a). Despite the decline in sea crossings, since 2015, the Mediterranean remains the world's deadliest border (IOM, 2017).

"You are feeling you are not here…"

On 20 March 2016, the EU-Turkey deal came into effect. Under this deal, migrants arriving irregularly to Greece, meaning either those who have not applied for asylum or whose claim has

been rejected, will be sent back to Turkey, which is considered a "safe third-country" or "safe first country of asylum." The deal was meant to reduce risk and halt the number of sea crossings. However, the EU-Turkey deal, combined with the closing of the Balkan route in early 2016, has only forced people to take more risky routes in order to evade border security.

"You are here, but you are not here..."

In September 2015, the European Commission drew up an emergency relocation agreement for its member states. This EU relocation scheme ended on 26 September 2017. Refugees who arrived and were fingerprinted by this date are eligible to register for relocation under this scheme. However, not all refugees are eligible to apply for relocation under this scheme. Under this agreement, the eligible countries (as of 1 July 2017) are Eritrea, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bhutan, Qatar, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, or a stateless person previously residing in one of these countries (EASO, n.d.). Additionally, in order to benefit from relocation, asylum seekers: must first apply for international protection in Greece or Italy; must go through the identification, registration and fingerprinting procedure carried out by the Italian and Greek authorities; must also show that they arrived in Italy or Greece between 24 March 2015 and 26 September 2017 (EASO, n.d.).

You are safe, but you are there..."

According to the International Rescue Committee, there are over 62,000 refugees in Greece, over half of whom are women and children (International Rescue Committee, n.d.). To accommodate these refugees, there are 33 camps on the mainland and 12 on the islands ("Greece Refugee Camps (info for volunteers)," n.d.).

…

In refugee camps throughout Greece, refugees wait to travel onwards… For forced migrants, smartphones are an absolute essential. They are the link to safety, to loved ones, to respite. This thesis explores the embodied practices of refugee women's smartphone use, as well as gendered affect across place and time. For the purposes of organising this thesis, I have separated place from time. However, as I hope becomes clear, place and time cannot be disentangled from one another – the two are continuously mutually defined (and redefined).

A note on language

In this thesis, I choose to use "home," instead of "home country," in order to acknowledge and affirm the diverse and contested identities of my informants, particularly those who identify as Kurdish. Widely considered "the largest stateless nation" (Vali, 1998), Kurdistan roughly occupies the region at the geographic intersection of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Though Kurdistan has distinct national identity, culture, and languages, the region is not formally recognised as a nation state. Kurdish nationalism was visible in the camp where I volunteered, and tensions between Kurdish and Arab residents occasionally led to conflict. Many residents I spoke with identified as Kurdish first and Syrian/Iraqi second. For this reason, I avoid terms such as "country," "state," or "nation," in favour of "home," "region," "homelands," or the specific term/name that informants used to identify their place of origin. Since leaving the camp, an independence referendum for Iraqi Kurdistan was held on 25 September 2017, with close to 93 percent of votes cast in favour of independence.

Chapter 1   Theoretical framework

1.1   Affect and emotionality

Affective value and stickiness

Sara Ahmed contends that affects should not only be conceptualised as emotional states, but as related to embodied experiences of social, cultural, and political histories. Histories, in this context, refer to "a relation of 'doing' in which there is not a distinction between active or passive" (2014, p. 91). Rather, histories are temporally affected, as well as materially and spatially embodied. Ahmed argues that "histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 90), produce affects that "stick" and leave their "mark or trace" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 6). Ahmed contends that affect is relational and embodied: "Stickiness then is about what objects do to other objects" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 91). Here, Ahmed's definition of "object" is broad – the object may be a smartphone, or it may be an "object of fear" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 219), such as the racialised body of the migrant. In the next section, I will elaborate on this first definition of object, and, in section 1.4, I will elaborate on the second.

Smartphones as embodied objects

For refugees and migrants, smartphones are uniquely sticky objects that are both material and embodied. Among other things, smartphones store photos, videos, texts, voice messages, apps, music playlists, and online profiles. Migrants may use their smartphones to communicate with smugglers and map out travel routes using GPS (Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 26). They may use messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, Skype, and Viber to update loved ones on the progress of their journey, and to let family know that they have arrived safely in Europe. For Farah, one of my informants, her smartphone is the link between her and her husband, who lives in Germany. She tells me:

<div dir="rtl">

هوه إنّو حكيت إنّو عّم احكي مع زوجي أطمئن عليه و يطمئن علينا
هي أحسن شي "beautiful" أحسن شي

</div>

"I can talk to my husband and make sure he is fine and he also can make sure that we are fine. That's the best thing, 'beautiful,' the best thing"

Farah and her three children (5, 8, 10) live in a refugee camp in mainland Greece. She describes her and her husband's transnational contact as *"beautiful."* Farah's decision to use the word "beautiful" here is significant. Sara Ahmed argues that "objects which circulate accumulate

affective value" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 218). However, not all objects accumulate the same amount or type of affective value. Ahmed argues that objects oriented toward good feeling acquire "more affective value" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 33) than other objects. For example, objects given to us by loved ones are oriented towards happiness, and thus, carry "positive affective value" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 29). For Farah, her smartphone is a "happy object" (Ahmed, 2010) because it allows her to communicate with her husband. In fact, for Farah, her smartphone is more than just a happy object. In our interactions, Farah regularly used her smartphone to refer to her husband, as though her smartphone was an embodiment of her husband.

Anna Reading (2009) argues, "Mobile phones are unique in relation to most other interactive media because they 'can be worn on the body.' This wearability, as opposed to the portability of the laptop or camera, means that the phone is increasingly being used as and experienced as, an extension of the embodied self" (Reading, 2009, p. 82). Reading cites various names given to cell phones: "mobile," "keitai" (literally "portable" in Japanese), "handy," each emphasising either the mobility/portability of the device, or imagining the device as an extension of the body (Reading, 2009, p. 82). Loretta Baldassar, Mihaela Nedelcu, Laura Merla and Raelene Wilding (2016) argue, "In typing the text message or holding the phone to one's ear we become, in both a physical and metaphysical sense, joined with the technology" (p. 141). As material objects carried on (or near to) the body, their shape, weight, feel, texture, and general corporeal object-ness make them uniquely embodied. Koen Leurs (2017) contends that the smartphone "personal pocket archives" of refugee youth act as "historical documentations of individual and collective experiences, feelings, traumas and aspirations" (Leurs, 2017, p. 675). Materials such as selfies, status updates, and hashtags may appear mundane; however, they are being mobilised by refugees, particularly youth, to articulate struggles with identity, well-being, bureaucracy, and communication rights (Leurs, 2017).

1.2   ICTs and transnational practices

Polymedia and co-presence

The theory of "polymedia" (Madianou & Miller, 2013) contends that media function as "environments of affordances," which users navigate in order to manage their emotions, interactions, and relationships (Madianou, 2016b, p. 75). Users choose between a variety of different forms depending on their needs, for example, SMS message, instant message (IM), email, or Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) platforms, like Skype. The emphasis is on "how

technologies, media and platforms are relationally defined" (Madianou, 2014b, p. 668), and how users make choices between these different media forms. Madianou argues that polymedia environments have enabled different types of mediated interaction and "co-presence" to develop (Madianou, 2016a, p. 187). Co-presence can be defined as the various ways of "feeling and being together" (Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016, p. 204). Co-presence may be physical (in-person), or it may be digitally mediated. In the case of transnational families, co-presence is practised from a distance.

Being "always on"

Madianou argues that the widespread availability of internet and the popularisation of smartphones, laptops, and tablets has changed our relationship to ICTs. Users may check their phone every fifteen minutes, open up Facebook on their laptop, and engage simultaneously with multiple apps located on multiple platforms. Madianou (2016a) characterises this as "an 'always on' culture of ubiquitous connectivity" (p. 198).

Ambient co-presence

This "always on" lifestyle contributes to "ambient co-presence," which "extends" the possibilities of co-presence at a distance, and "entails a peripheral awareness of others" (Madianou, 2016a, p. 196). Ambient co-presence "accentuates" our relationships; it may enhance feelings of belonging, but it also has important social surveillance implications (Madianou, 2016a, p. 198). Regardless, ambient co-presence offers up new ways for migrants to "do family" at a distance (Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016).

1.3 Waiting as affect

The UNHCR defines "a protracted refugee situation" as one in which 25,000 or more refugees from the same nationality have been in exile for five or more years in a given asylum country. They estimate that around 6.7 million refugees were living in a protracted situation by the end of 2015, with the average duration of protracted refugee situations estimated to be about 26 years (UNHCR, 2016, p. 20). In her research on the digital practices of Iraqi refugees in Jordan, Mirjam Twigt teases out "the mediation of waiting," or how situated experiences of waiting shape, and are shaped by, media use and social practices (Twigt, 2018, p. 3). She argues that waiting is "a deeply affective phenomenon" (p. 3), which is mediated through digital

technologies. Twigt puts forward the theory of "affective affordances," which uses affect theory to extend Madianou's concept of polymedia affordances. According to Twigt (2018), affective affordances "are the values and utilities particular *objects* – in this case digital technologies – have" (emphasis my own; p. 3). She argues that these affordances relate to our social location, which must be considered in the refugee context.

1.3　　　　Place and time

The network society and the deterritorialisation(?) of transnational families

　　　　Scholars have argued that the ubiquity of ICTs and the growing number of people, particularly migrants, "doing family" at a distance has led to a new deterritorialised transnational family (see, for example, Baldassar et al., 2016; Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016; Madianou, 2016a). This "deterritorialisation" of transnational families is, in many ways, exemplary of Manuel Castells' "network society." According to Castells, "a network society is a society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies" (Castells, 2004, p. 3). Through the ubiquity of ICTs, such as smartphones, VoIP platforms, and social media, information can be transmitted rapidly (sometimes instantaneously) between previously distant others. Polymedia environments allow users to negotiate the affordances of various platforms, for example, whether to use synchronous instant messaging apps like WhatsApp, or to use a more asynchronous platform, such as email (Madianou, 2016a, p. 188). Through these affordances, our relationship to space and time has significantly changed (Castells, 2010).

Space of flows and timeless time

　　　　Two key features of the "network society" are the "space of flows" and "timeless time" (Castells, 2004, p. 36). In the "space of flows," spatiality is related to social practices. Through ICTs, biological time, as well as logical sequences of time (such as clock time), are broken down resulting in "timeless time." Together, the "space of flows" and "timeless time" scramble sequences of life (past, present, future) through the compression of time (Castells, 2004, pp. 36–37). Although this is of theoretical significance, it is important to remember that the "network society" is largely premised on (global) capitalism. The "network society" operates on a binary logic of inclusion/exclusion, where "valuable additions" are "incorporated" into the network and

"territories, activities, and people that have little or no value" to the network are excluded (Castells, 2004, p. 23). While Castells recognises that this functionality produces inequality, he contends that inclusion/exclusion is "a structural feature of the network society" (Castells, 2004, p. 23). Here, it is important to consider relations of power. As conceptualised by Foucault (2002), power is not some "entity" (Foucault, 2002, p. 340) that can be possessed. Rather, power is relational (Foucault, 2002, p. 337), and "exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action" (Foucault, 2002, p. 340), transferred, or imposed. When power "begins to ossify into static forms… a relation of power tends towards becoming a state of domination" (Uzelman, 2011, p. 31). In the context of the "network society," the binary logic of inclusion/exclusion enforces domination.

Reterritorialising transnational families

The binary logic of inclusion/exclusion, which is systemic to the network society, is incompatible with the daily lived experiences of transnational families, especially forced migrants. I contend that the "space of flows" and "timeless time" cannot be fully realised by migrants, because, even if time and space are collapsed by technology, affectively, this is not (necessarily) the case. The everyday lives of migrants are ambivalent, contested, affective, emotional, and sensorial. Although the "network society" suggests otherwise, transnational families are not completely deterritorialised. Families are painfully aware of the boundaries and distances that keep them separated, boundaries, which, especially in the case of forced migrants, often exist due to forces beyond their control (Leurs, 2016, p. 30).

1.4   Bodies and space

Space invaders

Earlier, I introduced affect as related to "what objects do to other objects" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 91). For Ahmed, "surfaces or boundaries" are formed through emotions, and the ways that we respond to contact with "objects and others" (2014, p. 10). This has generative potential, but it also creates the possibility to produce unjust relations and acts of Othering. Nirmal Puwar (2004) uses the figure of the "space invader" to interrogate how certain bodies are read as "matter out of place" (Puwar, p. 10). The refugee woman, whose body is both gendered and racialised, is an example of a space invader. Her presence and participation disrupts and

disorients spaces typically occupied by the "somatic norm" (Puwar, 2004, p. 8), namely men and/or white people. Puwar argues, "Social spaces are not blank and open for any body to occupy. There is a connection between bodies and space, which is built, repeated and contested over time. While all can, in theory, enter, it is certain types of bodies that are tacitly designated as being the 'natural' occupants of specific positions" (Puwar, 2004, p. 8).

(Social) surveillance

Scholars have noted polymedia's and co-presence's capacity to surveil (see, for example, Baldassar et al., 2016; Madianou, 2016a). This is notable for migrants, whose lives are simultaneously lived "from the margins" and heavily monitored by law enforcement (Leurs, 2017). ICTs, especially social media, create new opportunities to produce counter-narratives in migrants' own words, yet "the affordances of internet-mediated platforms (e.g. the permanence of content, storage capacity, retrievability and reach) can accentuate the effects of mediation and its asymmetrical power structure" (Madianou, 2013, p. 189). It is important to consider what this means for refugees and migrants, whose presence are perceived as "a territorial threat" (Puwar, 2004, p. 144) to the European border regime. At borders, "satellite imagery, drones, and big data analytics" are used to track and monitor individuals attempting crossings (Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 35), and in migrant detention centres, internet access is severely restricted (Leurs, 2017, p. 680). While technology is celebrated among users located in the Global North, the figure of the "connected migrant" (Diminescu, 2008) is viewed with scepticism, suspicion, and suppression.

1.5 Making do

Strategies and tactics

Michel de Certeau (1984) theorises the dialectic of strategies and tactics. According to Certeau, strategies are place-based, and related to macro, systemic, or global, patterns of power. Tactics, meanwhile, are time-based (yet mobile), and related to micro, local relationalities of power in particular cases (Certeau, 1984). Yasmin Jiwani identifies Certeau's consideration of spatiality and temporality as "no longer tenable in this age of new technologies of communication" (Jiwani, 2011, p. 335). Instead, Jiwani applies "the basic schema" of strategies and tactics to the colonial/anti-colonial relationship (Jiwani, 2011, p. 335), which I have reproduced in the table below.

Strategies	Tactics
Disciplinary	Anti-disciplinary
Colonial	Anti-colonial
Institutional authority	Independent
Access to resources	Lacks resources, "makes do" with whatever is available in the environment
Deep structure	Surface structure
Settled, entrenched, fixed	Dynamic, mobile, emergent
Hegemonic	Counter-hegemonic

(Jiwani, 2011, p. 336)

This table can be used to conceptualise the ways that strategies and tactics figure into the daily lived experiences of migrants. Strategies are enacted through border regimes and the militarisation of borders, through the institutionalisation of migrant detention centres and refugee camps. Of course, it is important to remember that strategies and tactics are not isolated from one another. While tactics can be mobilised to undermine strategies, tactics can also be co-opted to create a foundation for strategies. This happens when the interaction and combination of locally fluid power relations congeal into recognisable terminal forms like the state – we see this, for example, through the NGO-isation of social movements and the securitisation of humanitarianism.

In the context of asylum, it is worth analysing the ways in which citizenship is used to discipline. In the Netherlands, a refugee may be granted a permanent asylum residence permit if, after five years of living in the Netherlands (with a temporary asylum residence permit), they still meet the conditions for temporary asylum (Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst (IND), n.d.) This means that, if in 2022, the Netherlands deems Syria "a safe country of origin" (Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst (IND), 2017), refugees who applied for asylum in 2017, may risk deportation. It is important to draw attention to how, even under so-called refugee resettlement schemes, citizenship is never really secure or guaranteed. In the case of refugees who achieve Dutch permanent residence, they may forever be identified by the Dutch pejorative "allochtoon" (literally "emerging from another soil"). This is only one of the many ways that strategies work against migrants.

In spite of this, migrants continuously mobilise digital technologies to resist strategies of control. In camp, residents used illegal software to obtain WiFi connections. The youth created an online magazine to share their stories and artwork on their terms. Following the start of Turkey's military operation in Afrin, Syrian residents that I follow on social media took action, using Instagram to directly address Erdoğan, and Facebook live to document actions they were

participating in. In my empirical section, I will further explore the ways that informants "make do" through micro-acts/practices of agency, well-being, and emotionality, which serve to undermine strategies of oppression.

1.6   Conclusions

Intervention in the literature

The majority of the literature on media and migration centres on questions of representation and communications. Rarely, is emotionality addressed in the context of migrant digital practices. When it discussed, it is often in the context of the "feminisation of migration" (Madianou, 2016b), that is, when women (typically from the Global South) travel to the Global North in order to work and send remittances home. However, "mothering" at a distance is not applicable in the context of the current migrant crisis. The "feminisation of migration" does not address the situated experiences of women in refugee camps left waiting (often with their children but without other family members) to travel onwards. In my theoretical section, I have listed notable interventions in the research at the intersection of emotionality, media, and migration (Baldassar et al., 2016; Leurs, 2016; Madianou, 2016a; Nedelcu & Wyss, 2016). My intervention in the literature is as follows: using emotionality as an entry point, this thesis explores refugee women's smartphone use and gendered affect across place and time by unpacking richly affective and embodied empirical data gathered at a refugee camp in mainland Greece. Additionally, I try to extend existing theories on waiting as affect (for example, Twigt, 2018), and propose "making do" as a tactic for negotiating the anxieties and ambivalences produced through protracted experiences of waiting.

Chapter 2　　Methodological trajectory I

2.1　　　　　Why did you come here?: exploring contestations

When I began recruiting informants for my interviews, it was difficult for some residents to understand my intentions, as up until that point, they had known me as one of several volunteers in the women's space. Now, I was asking something from them, which understandably, and rightfully, made me suspect. One resident asked me point-blank, *"Why did you come here?"* This question struck me. Although I had spent considerable time positioning myself, in that moment, I did not know how to respond. All I could think to say was why I was *not* there; I could not position myself in an affirmative way. Later that evening, I made the following entry in my field notes:

> *Today, one of the residents asked me why I came here. I really struggled to answer this question. I mumbled something about wanting to help and wanting to support women. And I described what I didn't want to be. I didn't want to be someone who held babies and photographed them without their parents' consent. Or someone who came to help to make themselves feel better. But I couldn't figure out how to say who I was, wanted to be, or why I came. I think I have an answer now. I came because I wanted to help, but also because I felt I had something to offer. I didn't want to just show up, unskilled, and uninvited. I came with an expertise that I hoped would be useful to the community – both at camp and once they were resettled. I came because I wanted to treat refugees with respect and dignity. I came with lots of expectations and ideas of how things would be, how the camp would be, how the people would be. And I was wrong about most of it. My time here has been wholly humbling. Above all, I've learned to listen. And that has been a gift.*

This encounter reminded me that power relations and contested identities must be continuously recognised and renegotiated in the field. Treating differences, as well as affinities, in power, positionality, knowledge and context, as ongoing processes, subject to change from the initial research design through to the final output of the project, is necessary in creating just relations with research participants (Sultana, 2007, p. 382). This might seem obvious – it did to me – however, it was not until this interaction that I realised the importance of situated positioning, which is the crux of feminist research practice. For this reason, this research project has centred a reflexive (Sultana, 2007) and vulnerable (Page, 2017) methodology, where questions of ethics, power, and positionality were regularly negotiated in the field, and represented justly in the writing and textual analysis of that fieldwork.

2.2   Positioning myself

As a white woman with dual Canadian-Irish citizenship, the mobility provided by my privileged position stands in stark contrast to the precarity of the residents I interacted with on a daily basis during my fieldwork. My EU-passport allowed me to fly with relative ease from the Netherlands (where I study), to Greece (where I conducted my fieldwork), back to the Netherlands (to write this thesis). In contrast, residents at camp, and refugees throughout Europe, continue to wait for asylum interviews that will determine their EU relocation or reunification assignment. As a feminist scholar from the Global North, a reflexive research process has kept me conscious that "however benevolently motivated" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 338) my research may be, "my immersive presence as well as my absence through leaving the field and writing are deeply embedded and potentially implicated in broader socio-political systems of globalisation, capitalism and colonialism" (Twigt, 2018, p. 7), something further accentuated by my theoretical framework, which is primarily grounded in literature out of North America and Western Europe (Page, 2017, p. 15). I am mindful that this thesis has been written to fulfil the requirements of a Master's thesis in Gender Studies at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. I have approached this research project from within the humanities, specifically, from within feminist studies. I am conscious that I am looking through a specific lens, and that this lens provides only partial sight (Haraway, 1988).

2.3   Reflexivity: promoting ethical relations

In her narrative of Mariam al-Khawli, Tiffany Page reflects on her struggle to represent, and produce knowledge from, another person's experience of suffering "without enacting forms of epistemic and symbolic violence" (Page, 2017, p. 16). Page's struggle to represent the life of al-Khawli resonates strongly with me. While writing this thesis, I felt the full responsibility to do justice to the experiences of the women I met in Greece, interacted with daily, and, in some cases, befriended. There are several women with whom I continue to keep in contact, and intend to maintain friendships with, well after this research project has ended. Yet, the "collaborations, connections, and solidarities" that materialise, or do not materialise, during fieldwork are rarely discussed in methodology" (Sultana, 2007, p. 381), as though the relationships we develop somehow weaken the robustness of our research, when, from my experience, they are central to the research process.

In a special issue on the forms of intimacy produced through the labour of research, editors Mariam Fraser and Nirmal Puwar (2008) ask researchers to consider "how we creatively carry the smells, textures, pains, desires, sounds and the visual store of memories of the research encounter with us, from the points of collection, to analyses and public presentation" (Fraser & Puwar, 2008, p. 2). As I am well aware of the ways this thesis is shaped by the relations, affects, experiences, voices, and silences that constituted my time in Greece, I have chosen to actively flesh out the relationships that are often absent in research outputs (Sultana, 2007, p. 381). With this in mind, I am cautious of how I represent the very real women whose time and care made this research project possible. In writing this thesis, I have foregrounded accountability, and aimed to write in a way that is receptive, vulnerable, and embodied, in order to think critically and reflexively about how to produce knowledge that is not only attentive to nuance and complexity, but that affirms and honours the lives of the women I was privileged to know intimately.

2.4   Methodological considerations of place and time

As this paper addresses gendered affect across place and time in its empirical section, it is worth elaborating on the methodological underpinnings of spatiality and temporality in the context of this research project. To fulfil the requirements of my Master's programme, I had to complete an internship. I chose to do my internship at an NGO in a refugee camp in Greece, and, it was while volunteering for this NGO, that I completed my fieldwork. Apart from an Erasmus+ mobility grant, I did not receive funding for my research. I was following a timeline that included me returning to the Netherlands, writing my thesis, and graduating. Sultana contends that there is "a politics of time in the research moment" (Sultana, 2007, p. 382). I would add that there is also a politics of place involved. As researchers, we perform within various material and immaterial spaces – personal, institutional, social, political, temporal, spatial. It is important to be mindful that the knowledge we produce in and through our research practice is embedded in relations of power, positionality, and social-political contexts that place researchers and research participants in "different locations" (Sultana, 2007, p. 382). Of course, these positions are not fixed; however, reflexivity requires us to be accountable for the ways that social location impacts knowledge production. Although I can geographically locate the area where I conducted my fieldwork, as well as the calendar days that I spent there, the situated context of this research project transcends objective understandings of place and time.

At camp, experiences of space and time differ between residents/non-residents and researchers/research participants. The tenure of a volunteer varies, but it is often agreed upon in advance and often short in duration. The NGO I volunteered with required a minimum stay of three weeks – some NGOs required volunteers to commit to as little as two weeks. In contrast, the amount of time a resident will spend at a refugee camp is uncertain, but often long in duration. Volunteers leave camp at the end of the day, they meet up with friends, go to a restaurant for dinner, have a drink at a bar, then sleep in a quiet place. Volunteers are free to leave the country at any time. They have a "home" to return to, whether it is a country, a city, a house. Residents at camp enjoy none of these privileges. In the context of the migrant crisis, there is constant "political and temporal instability" (Sultana, 2007, p. 382) with regard to war and conflict in places such as Syria, Iraq, Somalia, and South Sudan, as well as the capacity of refugee camps and resettlement schemes, and the future of the EU. At camp, residents are always waiting for news, good news, bad news, news from family, from friends, from UNHCR. They live in a constant state of hope and dread. Their mobility, protracted experience of waiting, and uncertain futures are experienced affectively and ambivalently.

Writing my thesis has been an experience all on its own. I have found it incredibly difficult to write, to begin, to conclude, and have managed to significantly elongate the writing process. It is this experience of impasse, of "feeling stuck" that I would like to tease out. At all times writing this thesis, I have felt the responsibility to do justice to my experiences and the people that I met. However, while this sense of responsibility has kept me focused and reflexive, it has also given me pause. I have had to think deeply about what is possible to represent, how best to represent it, and, inevitably, about what is excluded in my writing. It can be difficult to write when you know you cannot fully represent the lives of others, least of all, your personal experience. At times, I wish I had asked more questions during my interviews, or asked different questions. I regret not interviewing this person, as well as that person. I have many wishes, many regrets. During these times, I have found it productive to return to Page's (2017) concept of "vulnerable writing." Page rightfully notes, "Sometimes it is not always the case of needing more materials because of their incompleteness, but instead it involves working within the textures and material fabrics of what is available" (Page, 2017, p. 22). Page calls this "altering the tempo of writing" (Page, 2017, p. 22), and I have found it to be a productive approach to working through impasse. For me, altering the tempo of writing has involved permitting myself necessary forms of space and distance from writing. I have given myself time to think deeply, read more, read less (because we cannot read everything), and make connections. I have allowed myself to affectively experience this process, the stress, frustration, confusion, exhaustion, but also the hope,

excitement, inspiration, comfort, and joy that comes from working through my experiences and presenting them in a way that is ethical and true.

In the context of research outputs, Fraser and Puwar (2008) note, "In a legal contractual sense, most of our research-based consent forms offer us unbounded copyright licence with regards to the material, as long as we maintain anonymity and confidentiality" (Fraser & Puwar, 2008, p. 13). This is important to consider, as most scholars will present their research in various forms: dissertations, conference presentations, classroom lectures, scholarly publications, such as journal articles or books. When various outputs are derived from one research project, it is easy to become too close to, at the same time as too distant from, the material, as well as to the people who gave us access to their lives. Because we are so familiar with our research, we may take certain ethical questions for granted, or make them less explicit in our outputs, thereby minimising or diluting ethical considerations. Yet, "it is that with each act of re-presentation, ethical questions are raised," as each re-presentation has the potential to cause harm (Fraser & Puwar, 2008, p. 13). When we consider these things, and are reflexive and analytical, we can recognise that place and time are not objective; rather, place and time are subjective, contested, and embodied.

2.5   Feminist research design and methods

In order to foreground lived experience, emotionality, and embodiment, I have elected to use qualitative research methods. Given the subject of my research project and the size of my sample, it would be impossible to quantify the experiences of my informants. Moreover, my informants represent only a small sample of a highly heterogeneous community. In my analysis, I do not seek to universalise, or subsume, the very particular and personal experiences of my informants into something intelligible "in the name of a scholarly 'good'" (Fraser & Puwar, 2008, p. 10). Rather, I present their experiences as told to me with an eye toward revealing how "the particular is often universally significant" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 501), something, which I believe not only has sincere research value, but is ethically imperative. Above all, this particular research project seeks to affirm refugee women's voices and experiences as valuable sites of knowledge production.

Research consisted of in-depth interviews with fifteen informants using a semi-structured interview guide, featuring a photo elicitation exercise. Informants were mostly recruited through snowball sampling. I asked informants questions about their smartphone use and digital practices at camp, specifically as they related to emotionality. For example, informants were asked what

transnational connections they kept, which applications they used to communicate, and how using these applications made them feel. Informants were invited to share their social media profiles and digital content including images, videos, and posts. The photo elicitation exercise invited informants to show a favourite photo and answer W5H (who, what, when, where, why, how) questions related to the image.

Photos were used as "research tools" (Moreno Figueroa, 2008, p. 74) in order to create a sense of "shared intimacy" (Moreno Figueroa, 2008, p. 68) during structured interviews, but also in more candid encounters with residents. Often, during activities in the WS, or during a home visit, a resident would hold up her smartphone to display a photo of her taken five years earlier, or the smiling face of a son or daughter. The phone would be passed around, as everyone exclaimed, *"Is this you? You look so beautiful! He has your eyes. She looks just like you."* I, too, would share personal photos – *"Your father is very tall. Your mother's smile is the same as yours."* In this way, residents and I engaged in "looking emotionally," a concept of embodied and affective sight that is concerned with "how [the photo] feels, what it is like" (Moreno Figueroa, 2008, p. 80). While the use of photographs was initially only one aspect of my methodology, intended as an exercise within the interview, images became central to my data collection. Photos were "more than a mere prompt for discussion" – the visual images became an integral part of how informants "experienced and confronted" their emotions (Fraser & Puwar, 2008, p. 10). Private personal photographs were shared with me, though I was not always given permission to photograph or reproduce them. Regarding one photo, of an informant and her husband in Athens, the informant told me, *"Alexandra, just for you. No Internet, no Facebook."* However, even in the case of images given to me with consent, I have been cautious about which images I choose to reproduce in this document.

Additionally, I conducted repeated unstructured observations in informants' and residents' caravans, the WS, and the camp's "public" spaces. These observations mostly consisted of media-viewing, initiated by residents who wished to share photos of family and friends, as well as photos taken in their place of origin, during their migrant journey, or on trips to Athens or the nearby Greek town.[1]

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[1] UNHCR and IOM operated weekly buses to these two cities. These buses were reserved for residents with asylum interviews (based in Athens), or for those with doctor's appointments. Remaining seats were available on a first-come, first-served basis. Additionally, weekly buses were scheduled for children attending Greek schools.

2.6   Process, not product: producing socially just research

I have already described how research and writing are challenging processes, at times slow and isolating, filled with vulnerability, challenges, and moments of impasse. I know I am not alone in this feeling; yet, I have rarely encountered reflections on impasse in scholarly writing. Why is this? When young scholars, such as myself, read polished accounts of field research, where everything went according to plan, it is easy to assume that we are doing, or have done, something wrong when we encounter obstacles. Worse still, this fear of impasse or "failing" may lead researchers to gloss over ethical considerations, exclude certain expressions of participant agency from final outputs, or present their limitations within a positivist approach. I would argue that methodological challenges should be presented transparently alongside methodological triumphs, recognised as an equally important element of the research process. The negative connotation surrounding impasse should be problematised, and expressions of research participant's agency, such as refusals, should be reframed as generative within an affirmative and ethical research framework. Moments of vulnerability, moments where researchers are called out or in, such as when a resident asked me, *"Why did you come here?"* deserve space in our research outputs because they bring insight and nuance to our methodologies, highlight the value of a reflexive research process, and elucidate what is meant by producing situated, grounded, and ethical knowledge. Above all, a vulnerable methodology asks researchers to be "receptive to the limits of knowing" (Page, 2017, p. 18), something that is not always easy for researchers, especially when they face institutional pressures to publish frequently and/or produce various research outcomes under strict deadlines.

Scholarship that is truly invested in minimising harm is attentive to the micro- and macro-politics that are inevitably enacted through our work. These tensions play out materially in our fieldwork, but also discursively in our research outputs. As researchers, it is easy to centre the research process and output around our needs. It is easier still to feel entitled to certain field experiences and research outcomes, regardless of the ethical implications. However, these types of centrings are inherently violent, and it is important to catch ourselves in these self-centred slippages (Page, 2017, p. 24). For this reason, a significant portion of this methodological section has been dedicated to engaging with questions of ethics, positionality, relations of power, reflexivity, knowledge, and context. While I understand that acknowledging these issues does not guarantee the production of critical, responsible research, as Sultana notes, "the alternative of not heeding such issues is even more problematic" (Sultana, 2007, p. 383). Ethical implications have material consequences, and no research is so path-breaking as to justify exploitation.

Chapter 3   Methodological trajectory II

3.1   The fieldwork

Local environment

Over a period of three months, I undertook fieldwork at a semi-permanent[2] refugee camp in mainland Greece. I volunteered with an NGO, where I worked in their women's space (WS), a private, fenced in area designated for women and girls ages 12 and up. As a volunteer, I collaborated with the WS coordinator and the gender-based violence (GBV) protection officer in order to perform outreach to all women at the camp and facilitate mental health and psychosocial support activities in the WS. In addition, I assisted in tracking the vulnerability of women at camp, particularly those identified as at risk of experiencing GBV or a mental health crisis. Open Tuesday to Friday, from 13:00 to 16:00, the WS offered a space where women could come to participate in various activities, for example, knitting circles and dance classes, enjoy coffee or tea, and/or socialise with other women.

The camp was home to a diverse population. The majority of residents were between the ages of 25 and 36. 44% identified as female and 52% identified as male. The population of the camp was majority Syrian (77%). 39% of residents identified as Syrian Arabs and 38% identified as Syrian Kurds, with 42% of residents identifying Arabic as their native language and 56% of residents identifying Kurdish as their native language. The remaining 23% of residents identified as Iranian, Iraqi, Iraqi-Kurd, Moroccan, Palestinian-Syrian, Syrian-Moroccan, Somali, Sudanese.[3].

Many residents had passed through other camps before reaching this one; those who had, often mentioned that the conditions were better than at other camps. Though residents originally lived in tents on a small section of land, the camp had recently been winterised. Residents now lived in numbered isoboxes (converted shipping containers), referred to by residents as "caravans." At this camp, caravans were configured with heating and cooling systems, and contained a living space, cooking area, shower, and toilet. There were 158 caravans housing between 650 and 800 residents at camp, excluding the security isobox for vulnerable persons. One caravan normally housed one family, ranging from two to eight persons, though some families needed multiple caravans. There were also several caravans shared by

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[2] A semi-permanent refugee camp is expected to exist for three to five years.
[3] All data is from a needs-assessment (dated 20 February 2017) conducted by the NGO I volunteered with. All numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

unaccompanied youth, single men, female friends, or minority groups. For example, there was one caravan shared by six women from Somalia (who did not know one another before arriving in Greece). The two largest ethnic populations were Syrian Arabs and Syrian Kurds – each almost equally represented. Additionally, there were residents from Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.

The camp was located on a former military air base, about eighty kilometres north of Athens. Military aircraft still regularly flew overhead during training exercises. When they did, the sound of airplane engines drowned out all sounds on the ground, silencing conversations for five seconds or so until the planes cleared. The sound and sight of planes were not only a cruel reminder of residents' restricted mobility, but a haunting and triggering memory of the conflict from which they fled. Several residents spoke of the aerial bombings that they had endured in Syria. Some reacted viscerally and visibly to the sounds of planes overhead – tensing their faces and bodies, grimacing, crying, or tucking their legs against their chest and rocking back and forth. This sound, which had become part of the camp's ambient noise, is audible throughout my interview recordings.

Open camps and "the gaze"

The camp was open, which meant that residents were free to come and go as they pleased, though long absences would result in a resident being evicted from their caravan (so that someone new could move in). Though there are certainly advantages to open refugee camps, for example, increased mobility and autonomy for residents, there are also significant drawbacks. While closed camps are guarded (in Greece, typically by the military), open camps are unpatrolled. This means that anyone can enter a camp at any time – no permission or special clearance are required. This poses obvious protection issues, for example, people in open camps are more vulnerable to human trafficking (Amnesty International, 2016). In terms of camp organisation, it is difficult to regulate practices and processes among actors and NGOs when anyone, or any organisation, is allowed in. Additionally, open camps maintain the gaze, and perpetuate stereotypical narratives of refugees as vulnerable Others and implicit victims in need of saving.

During my fieldwork, I saw many people pass through: journalists, film crews, researchers, curious Greeks, independent volunteers (those not volunteering with an NGO/actor at camp), even tourists aboard tour buses and people in camper vans. These people came for a variety of reasons – to find a story, to take a picture, to "help," to hang out, to view

the conditions – but, always, to gaze. People came to gaze at a distance – whether the distance was physical, emotional, social, cultural, economic, or otherwise, there were always relations of power in place that underpinned the gaze.

Yet, despite the dangers of an open camp, and the often problematic, exploitative, and voyeuristic motivations behind certain visits, or intrusions, many residents preferred this to the alternative. When asked why they did not want a closed camp, residents exercised agency: *"I can choose who I want to talk to."* Above all, residents liked that they could come and go as they pleased, provided they had the funds to call a taxi, or carpool, out of the camp's remote location. Additionally, an open camp allowed residents to visit friends or family in Greece, take a trip to celebrate a wedding anniversary, or entertain guests in their caravans (all of which I witnessed during my time at the camp). In short, although, open camps come with greater safety and security risk, they also allow for greater freedoms and autonomy – and the latter was deemed more important by residents.

3.2 Intersectional considerations

Organisational structure of the camp

When the camp transitioned from tents to isoboxes, little consideration was given regarding the organisation and layout of isoboxes. As a result, certain areas of vulnerability arose. The isobox area was surrounded by empty, open space on three sides. There were four blocks of isoboxes, each of which had four or five rows down the middle with isoboxes on either side. Some residents used these rows to create shared community spaces. Some rows were closed off on one end, with the use of tarps, crates, and wood, so that the space could be used for socialising, with picnic tables and benches brought in or created from materials at camp. However, these closed off rows posed safety and security issues as well. If there was a fire at the open end of the row, residents could become trapped inside. There was one section in camp that was closed off on one end and covered over so that it was always dark and shaded. Mostly men resided in this section and would often socialise around a fire pit. There were women who lived here as well, and wives would often join their husbands, but single women rarely did.

In particular, the isobox containing six Somali women was flagged as particularly vulnerable, as they were the only Black women in camp. Behind their isobox, there was an open field. At one point, the water in the Somali women's isobox stopped running. In order to get water, they went to the isobox opposite theirs, which was an isobox of single Syrian men. While

they were without water, they were, in some capacity, dependant on the men in the isobox opposite to them. The men could have used their position to exploit the women. However, I want to be clear that this did not happen. Still, racial and gender dynamics like these should be taken into consideration by camp management when assigning residents to isoboxes. The Somali women should never have been put in a potentially unsafe situation.

Disability and accessibility

Delal, 41, lives in camp with her husband and five children. Originally from Iraqi Kurdistan, she suffered a spinal injury during her family's boat crossing to Greece. Delal has rheumatism and, as a result of this and her injury, she experiences chronic pain. In order for her to go outside, her husband must assist, and travelling long distances usually requires a wheelchair. However, their isobox does not have a ramp. In fact, few of the isoboxes maintained by NGOs and other actors have ramps. Like most refugee camps, this refugee camp is not accessible for those with physical disabilities. The camp is covered in gravel, which is very difficult to push a wheelchair through. Delal's husband has a special technique for crossing the gravel. He tips the wheelchair back onto its two largest wheels so that Delal is tilted back, looking up at the sky, which requires a lot of physical strength on his part. It also requires a lot of emotional strength from Delal. Delal does not like the attention she receives when she goes outside. Children stop to stare at the woman in the wheelchair. She looks so out of place amid the rubble. People look at her with sadness, with pity.

Delal loves to knit and crochet. She came to the WS on days when we had yarn. Her husband wheeled her into the space and then waited outside our isobox until she was ready to leave. However, the women's space is for women only; men are not allowed inside. Delal's husband was an occasional exception to this rule; however, this exception disrespected some women's religious practice. They felt uncomfortable when he was in the space. They would not sit outside, or dance on dance days, or take off their hijabs (as they normally would) if he was in the space, or if they know he would be picking up or dropping off Delal. In this example, gender, disability, and religion interlock to demonstrate the ways in which inclusion, exclusion, and oppression are heterogeneous and intersectional. Although it took months, we eventually installed a ramp outside of the WS isobox. Once inside the front door, we could meet Delal and her husband and wheel Delal to the WS, across the yard, and up the ramp into our isobox. Of course, while our isobox now had a ramp, there was still a step outside the front door onto the wooden boards of the entryway, the hill up to our space and down to the area where residents

lived. There were no ramps installed at the isoboxes maintained by other actors. There was no ramp installed at their isobox. Yet, the expectation was that they would be grateful.
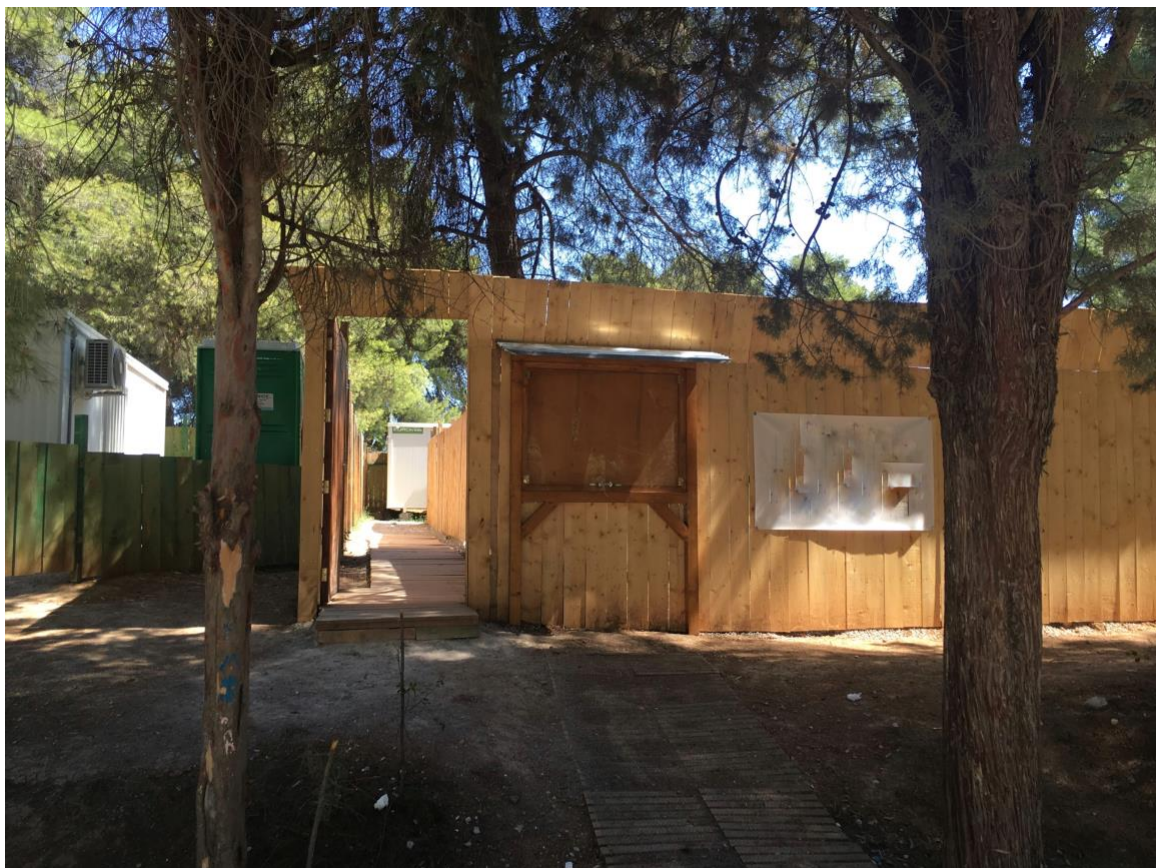
Photo above: Inside the WS

Photo below: Outside the WS

Arab-Kurdish relations

There were visible tensions between Arab and Kurdish residents – for example, bullying on the buses to and from the Greek primary schools that the children attended, and fights at night, after the actors and NGOs had left camp. In the WS, it was common to overhear churlish exchanges between Arab and Kurdish women. Certain activities also created a space for the representation of identity. Knitting was one of the most popular activities in the WS – women were allowed to take up to three balls of yarn a week. This yarn was purchased weekly, based on colour requests by the women. On average, we distributed 200 balls of yarn per month. Among the most popular colours were red, green, white, and yellow. However, it was not just any shade of red, green, and yellow that were popular – it was shades that matched the Kurdish flag that were popular. Residents who requested them explicitly identified these colours as "Kurdish." They made bracelets, headbands, and scarves using these colours. Kurdish residents were proud of their Kurdish identity. Even after I left, I noticed that many Kurdish residents had added a filter to their Facebook profile pictures in support of the Kurdish referendum in Iraq. The filter read "yes / for independence / Kurdistan [the forward slashes represent line breaks]" and featured details of the Kurdish flag, including red, white, and green stripes and a yellow sun.

At the camp management level, there was a long discussion about how we would observe Newroz, the Kurdish New Year. Similarly, there was a discussion about how we would observe Ramadan, the holiest month of the year for Muslims. Would we devote programming and funding to these ethnic/religious observances? Not everyone in camp was Kurdish. Not everyone in camp was Muslim. Camp management was unsure how the Arab population would feel about actors celebrating Newroz, or how non-Muslims would feel about actors changing their schedules to accommodate fasting hours during Ramadan. In the end, the camp celebrated Newroz and observed Ramadan. Neither observances caused issues. However, the fact that both occasions required such thoughtful and prolonged discussion demonstrates that topics related to identity, ethnicity, and religion were significant issues at camp.

3.3 Table of informants

This table started with a simple suggestion – *Why not create a table to display general information about your informants?* At the time, I had long descriptive paragraphs outlining this information. A table would be more efficient and more clear. However, I found that the table was not simple to create. It required me to make choices about what to include and what to exclude – whether this was in regard to protecting anonymity, including information that I found interesting and relevant, or to expressing a particular politics. As noted earlier, although the majority of residents at the camp were from Syria, they often self-identified as either Arab or Kurdish – this distinction was significant to residents and it created division. Although two people might have been born in Syria, if one was ethnically Arab and one was ethnically Kurdish, this difference would be called out. For this reason, I have included a column for ethnicity (self-identified).

	Age	Ethnicity (self-identified)	Time in Greece	Desired Relocation Country	Education/Occupation	Summary of household/family situation
Amina	19	Syrian Kurd	One year, two months. Previously spent an unspecified time in Turkey and two years in Iraq.	Canada	Attended primary school, did not complete due to war.	Single, lives with parents and four siblings (including Hayat and Zara).
Anood	16	Syrian Kurd	One year	Germany, France	Attended primary school, did not complete due to war.	Single, lives with parents and brother.
Awaz	20	Iraqi Kurd	Ten months	UK, Sweden	Attended a fine arts secondary school, where she specialised in music. Stopped attending due to the war.	Single, lives with parents, and four siblings (including Rozhin and Yara).
Delal	41	Iraqi Kurd	Ten months	Unknown	Secondary school teacher, taught history and geography.	Married, lives with husband, and five children (including Awaz, Rozhin, Yara).
Dino	15	Syrian Kurd	Unknown	Unknown	Attended primary school, did not complete due to war.	Single, lives with parents, two siblings, several cousins.
Farah	27	Syrian Kurd	One year, two months	Germany	Attended primary school, but parents did not allow her to continue onto secondary education.	Married, lives with three children (5, 8, 10). Her husband lives in Germany; awaiting reunification. Parents remain in Syria.
Fatima	29	Syrian Arab	One year, one month. Previously spent four months in Turkey, four years in Dubai, UAE, and brief period in Lebanon.	Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Canada	Completed secondary school, worked as child caregiver.	Married, lives with husband and two children (<1, 6).
Hayat	17	Syrian Kurd	One year, two months. Previously spent an unspecified time in Turkey and two years in Iraq.	Ireland	Attended primary school, did not complete due to war.	Single, lives with parents and four siblings (including Amina and Zara).

Lulu	27	Syrian Kurd	Eight months	Germany	Enrolled in BA Arabic Literature, but did not complete due to war.	Married, lives with infant son. Husband lives in German; awaiting reunification.
Nadia	23	Syrian Arab	One year, one month. Previously spent one month in Turkey.	Germany	BA Arabic Literature, worked as stay-at-home mom	Married, lives with husband and two daughters (1, 3). Brother lives in Germany. Parents remain in Syria.
Rania	24	Syrian Arab	Unknown. Previously spent six months in Turkey.	Germany	Enrolled in MSc Building Engineering, but did not complete due to war. Had multiple jobs: stay-at home mom, library clerk, nurse, school teacher, secretary.	Married, lives with son (toddler). Husband lives in Germany; awaiting reunification. Parents remain in Syria.
Rozhin	19	Iraqi Kurd	Ten months	Denmark	Enrolled in secondary school before war, did not complete.	Single, lives with parents and four siblings (including Awaz and Yara).
Wardah	35	Somali	One year, one month. Previously spent one year, six months in Turkey	Greece (hopes her children will join her)	Attended primary school, did not complete due to war. Worked as vendor/merchant.	Widow, lives with five other Somali women that she met at various points on her migration journey. Her four children (4, 6, 8, 10) live in Somalia, and she hopes they will be able to join her in Greece.
Yara	10	Iraqi Kurd	Ten months	Unknown	Attended primary school, did not complete due to war.	Single, lives with parents and four siblings (including Awaz and Rozhin).
Zara	16	Syrian Kurd	One year, two months. Previously spent an unspecified time in Turkey and two years in Iraq	Germany, Belgium, France	Attended primary school, did not complete due to war.	Single, lives with parents and four siblings (including Amina and Hayat).

The table above shows non-confidential details of my informants. Pseudonyms were either self-selected or assigned by me. The fifteen informants were women between the ages of 10 and 41, the majority between 16 and 25. In the case of minors, parents or older siblings were present to provide consent. Though all informants were residents of the refugee camp where I volunteered, the women were racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse. Informants self-identified the following ways: Arabic (Syrian), Kurdish (Syrian Kurd, Iraqi Kurd), Somali, Muslim, non-Muslim. All fifteen informants had smartphones. Eight of the informants had been in Greece for one year or more. The majority wished to be relocated to Germany, usually because they already had a family member living there. With the exception of one informant, all were accompanied by at least one family member (though in the case of three informants, the family members were children under the age of 10). Three informants were working before leaving home, and ten either held an advanced degree or were in school/university before fleeing. All those forced to quit school because of war explicitly stated their desire to resume studies once relocated in Europe.

3.4 Limitations: language, translation, and text-to-speech software

The most obvious limitation of my research is that I am not fluent in the primary languages of my informants, these being Arabic and Kurdish. Unfortunately, due to the limited resources available to me and the camp itself, I did not have access to a translator, though in some instances, friends or family acted as translators. I had my interview guide translated into Arabic, although I tried to share this with informants only when necessary (for example, when the informant did not understand my question), as I found that once the informant had the list of translated questions in front of her, she tended to answer the questions in quick succession, which would prevent the interview from unfolding organically or conversationally. This limited who I was able to interview, as I mainly recruited informants who I knew spoke English well. Interviews were conducted in English, though one informant chose to answer my questions in Arabic. Her answers were then transcribed in Arabic and translated into English. Additionally, I used text-to-speech (TTS) software to audio-record the interview questions in advance, in order to account for the illiteracy of one of my informants.

Due to these language limitations, I drew up an informed consent document that detailed the purpose, aims, and goals of my research project, and had the document translated into Arabic. This consent form explicitly stated that the findings of my research would be used to form part of my Master's thesis. It stated that participation was voluntary, participation could be withdrawn at any time, anonymity would be protected through the use of pseudonyms, and that the interview would be audio-recorded and transcribed. Informants were given my contact information, as well as the contact information of my supervisor, should they wish to follow up on any aspect of the research project.

3.5 Data visualisation

Interviews were transcribed ad verbatim, and recordings and transcripts were saved in a password protected folder on my laptop, and coded inductively using qualitative data analysis software. Using this software, I generated the following word cloud to visualise the words appearing most frequently in my interview transcripts.

Immediately, the words *I, yes, no, phone* and *like* are visible, but also *Facebook, WhatsApp, camp, home, month, year, family, happy, feel.* These words speak to the four broad themes of this thesis: usage, place, time, and emotionality.

Chapter 4   Empirical Section

"But when you leave your family and you feeling it's maybe dangerous, you are feeling you are not here. You are here, but you are not here. You are safe, but you are there. You're thinking there, you know, it's… so hard. So if I watching… because that I can't watch the news. 'Cause we don't have something to do, to help here, or to be… So every time if I not good, or I not feeling good, so I call, 'Yea, I'm good, I'm happy I'm very, very good, yes' to not think about me. Because, yes, I'm good, but I thinking about… my think [thoughts] with them, so I can't. Every… something… you have to be happy, you can't because uh… When you feeling happy, you want everybody, you love him, be happy with you, or you want share the happy."

– Rania

Rania, 24, is a Syrian Arab from Deir ez-Zor, in eastern Syria. She lives in camp with her son, a toddler. Her husband lives in Germany. Rania occasionally visits the women's space, but only when she can find someone to watch her son. She does not like leaving him at the camp's child friendly space, as she thinks it is understaffed: *"It is not good, the children can walk out."* Over the years Rania has worked various jobs, from library clerk to nurse, secretary to school teacher. When the war broke out, she was in the middle of completing her Master's degree in Building Engineering. She hopes that, soon, she and her son can join her husband in Germany, although she has not yet had an asylum interview. Every day, she waits for a phone call from the asylum office in Athens, and regularly contacts her lawyer to see whether there are any updates on her case. When I see her around camp, we often speak about school, language, and family. During our interview, she tells me that her parents are still in Syria and I ask her whether she thinks they will stay.

> Rania: *"I don't know. My mother and father is… are old people. Where you go?"*
> Alex: "Are they safe where they are?"
> Rania: *"I don't know, I hope.. you know the war is very..."*

Rania trails off. I try to reassure her, but she cuts me off with the quotation that I opened this section with. Her quote, *"You are here, but you are not here"* speaks to the affective and (dis)embodied feeling of living apart from loved ones. Her quotation touches on four key subjects that emerged from my interviews: phone usage, place, time, and emotionality, all of which will be further explored in this empirical section. In her reflection, Rania speaks candidly about living in different places and on different times, and the ambivalent response that this tension creates. For Rania, knowing what is happening in Syria is just as stressful, if not more stressful, as not knowing. Rania's description of feeling disconnected from her current environment, of feeling spread thin across two or more spaces, each temporally and spatially dislocated, echoes the testimonies of other informants. Rania describes feeling helpless at this distance, as well as the actions she takes to overcome the negative feeling that she accrues living in the camp away from loved ones. One of these actions is chatting with her family over the

phone. By speaking with her family, she feels relieved to know they are alright, and knowing this significantly improves her personal wellbeing. This act of co-presence, provided by her and her family's mobile phones, allows Rania and her family to replace negative feelings of fear, sadness, and helplessness with positive feelings of hope, happiness, and reassurance. Rania also describes how this positive feeling is generative, how when her family is happy, she is happy, and how, when she is happy, she wants others to be happy. Using Rania's reflection as an entry point, this empirical section will explore informants' experiences of gendered affect as is relates to phone usage, place, and time in order to explore the relationship between digital practices and emotionality.

4.1 Usage

Popular uses

Among informants, smartphones were mainly used to communicate with transnational friends and family, as well as for social media and light entertainment purposes. While Farah associates her smartphone with her husband, who she hopes to join in Germany, Hayat uses her phone to post photos on Instagram, which her friends then "like." Meanwhile, Fatima participates in various WhatsApp group chats – she has one with her family in Syria and another with the friends she met in camp who have since been resettled in Europe. Popular apps included: VoiP applications, such as WhatsApp, iMo, and Viber); social media, such as Facebook and Instagram (the latter for finding knitting designs, and keeping up with hair, makeup, and fashion trends); YouTube (for music and videos); and language and exercise apps.

Unpopular uses: non-news consumption as self-care

Absent from this list of popular phone apps and uses are news websites and political updates. In fact, politics was notably absent from our interviews, even when I brought up the subject. When asked, the majority of my informants said they did not actively seek out news about current events in their homelands. In fact, many informants said that they actively chose to *not* follow the news. This differed from my expectations, as I presumed informants would spend considerable time keeping up-to-date on news, politics, and current events. However, the opposite was true. In our interview, Rania explains why she does *"not really"* follow the news:

> *Rania: "If I always uh follow the news uh maybe I will be crazy because uhm everyday many people kill and uh die and uh bomb bomb everywhere so always I will be nervous and thinking so I have to be more strong because you know I'm woman here alone and with child so I be so nervous it's not good for my baby and maybe I can um I can't um do my what I have to do and uh right way."*

The fact that following news about Syria could be triggering for Rania had not even occurred to me – this reflects the prejudices and expectations that I had brought to the interview. I had expected the people I encountered at camp to be politically active, when for the most part, they were just trying to survive. Fortunately, I was able to recognise the preconceived notions, prejudices, and privilege that I had unknowingly carried with me into the field. Not only had I not considered the contested identities of residents, I had not considered my own contested identity.

Rania's reflection on feeling the need *"to be more strong"* for her child was echoed by other informants with children, particularly those who were at camp without other adult family members. Of the ten informants aged 18 and older, three were accompanied by children aged 10 and under. As Audre Lorde rightfully notes in her epilogue to *A Burst of Light*, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (Lorde, 2017, p. 130). In the context of forced migration, where individuals are often denied basic human rights, self-care is a radical act.

"Making do"

Through this process of self-care, Rania engages in "making do" (Certeau, 1984) at a micro-level. Rania prefers to get her news *"from the people,"* meaning from her friends and family. They tell her the most important information, and edit out the rest. Rania is tactical in her expenditure of emotional labour – she seeks out the news that affects her and her loved ones, as curated by her personal network. Of course, this brings bias; however, this bias has a positive impact on Rania's wellbeing, and maintaining wellbeing is significant, especially when living in precarity. While the sensible, strategic thing may be to follow the major Middle Eastern or international news networks (their obvious bias aside), doing so does nothing to improve her quality of life or present circumstances. In fact, it only produces greater negative feeling. For this reason, Rania and other informants do not follow the mass media. Instead, they use their smartphones to maintain intimate connections – through encrypted messages – and engage in a type of grassroots citizen journalism. Moreover, Rania's, and other informants', non-news consumption can be read as an agential act of bordering. In actively choosing to avoid news that could be upsetting or triggering, Rania is setting emotional boundaries, which is essential to the

management of personal wellbeing. Rania knows her limits, and she knows what she needs to do, and not do, in order to survive in her present circumstances and provide and care for her son.

4.3 Place

Co-presence

Lulu, 27, is a Syrian Kurd from Hasakah, in north-eastern Syria. She has been in Greece for eight months, with her son, sister-in-law, and nephew. In Syria, she studied Arabic *"in university, but I don't, didn't complete because 'dom dom,'"* imitating the sounds of exploding bombs. When the war intensified, Lulu (then pregnant) fled Syria with her husband. Lulu ended up in the camps, while her husband travelled overland to Germany. Since then, Lulu has given birth to their son. Her husband has never seen him in person – their entire relationship has been mediated through Lulu's and her husband's respective smartphones. Every day, Lulu sends her husband photos and videos of their son via WhatsApp.

> Alex: And is he happy when he gets them?
> *Lulu: WOOOAH haha *joyful exclamation**
> Alex: Yea, really happy?
> *Lulu: Yea*
> Alex: Aww
> *Lulu: Yesterday, I ask my husband when I come to airport and uh see me and my baby... uhm who do you [hug].... uhh who do you [hug]*
> Alex: Yea, who do who hug first?
> *Lulu: Say the first? He told... he said together.*
> Alex: Together?
> *Lulu: I said no just one, he said, no no together.*

In this exchange, Lulu asks her husband who he will hug first when he sees her and their son at the airport. Her husband says he will hug them together, but she says he can only choose one. He insists, *"no, together."* Here, I wish to highlight several things: the experience of living apart, future orientations, and the affect of waiting. Within all of these, emotionality is a constant. In this exchange, Lulu imagines the day when her and her husband are reunited – she does not describe the words she wishes to hear from him; rather, she speaks of proximity and touch, each a form of non-verbal communication and meaning-making. For Lulu, and other refugees, digital co-presence is always a compromise for physical co-presence (Baldassar et al., 2016, pp. 137–138). Lulu looks hopefully toward the future, awaiting the day when the physical geographical boundaries between her and her husband are collapsed.

Navigating future space: photo mapping as space-making

During our interview, Lulu describes how she comes to know her husband's city through the selfies he takes. She shows me pictures of her husband in front of his language school, the university (where they both hope to study), and various city landmarks. In this way, Lulu comes to have a perception of the city's layout. Of course, this map is subjective. Not only are the images curated by her husband, but the images themselves are imbued with good feeling, since Lulu is happy to receive photos from him. Additionally, Lulu's future expectations extend beyond her expectations of German geography, architecture, and landscape: *"Yesterday I said my husband 'if I come to Germany I will complete my study yea and uh after that I will baby'… another baby, haha."* Lulu has expectations for how her life will be once her reunification application is approved. She plans to resume her studies in Germany, and further improve her language skills – already, she speaks Arabic, Kurdish, and English. She hopes to, one day, work as a translator for a humanitarian organisation. From photo-mapping through selfies, to family planning, to education and career, Lulu's engagement with her smartphone shapes so much. In the next section, I will further explore the ways that ICTs shape and facilitate informants' future orientation and expectations.

Future orientations

In my interviews, I asked informants how they came to know the country where they would be relocated. Informants said they used a mixture of Google, word of mouth, and images sent by family and friends. When asked how they assembled their list of top relocation destinations, informants said family played a significant role in decision making. In particular, having a family member (even if not an immediate relation) already living in a European country, made them more likely to consider that country (Twigt, 2018, p. 11). Other factors included: passport strength, country reputation among refugees or in the media, language, safety, and culture. For example, Fatima, 29, who is in camp with her husband and two children, hopes to go to Germany: *"Uh, for Germany, I have a brother and have another friend tell me uh Germany the best and I looking for Google for passport, who's* **strong***? [emphasis on strong]."* Unlike Fatima, Zara's future orientation is shaped less by global politics and mobility, and more by an idealised perception of Europe. Zara, 16, keeps a photo of the Eiffel tower as her home screen. When I ask her why, she replies, *"Paris forever."* She has never been to Paris, but she wishes to be relocated to France,

Germany, or Belgium: *"Germany because my grandfather and my uncle is there. Belgique because they talk France."* Among my informants, Germany was viewed most favourably, followed by Scandinavian countries, which were perceived as having a high quality of life.

Navigating present space: gendered infrastructures

In terms of navigating present space in camp, asymmetrical access to wi-fi and data plans reveals a gendered infrastructure, which negatively impacts women's movement within the camp and increases their vulnerability. While there is wi-fi at camp, the signal is quite weak and does not work inside of isoboxes. For this reason, many residents opt to purchase monthly data plans (ranging from €5 to €20) using the small monthly allowances provided by the Red Cross. However, these data plans are not purchased in camp – residents must travel to a nearby Greek town, or Athens, which is 80 kilometres away. For single women, women with children, older, or disabled women, this trip is not an easy one. It involves navigating an unfamiliar city, sometimes with young children, and interacting with people who speak an unfamiliar language. As Rania explains:

> *"If I go in Athens my friends in Greece and be in place I can't contact them I - I don't know where I am. Sometimes on mobile you can search on GPS where are you, or your friend can send to you GPS so you can find the way for her, but if I don't have, I don't know, I think I have to ask some people, because when I go to Athens they say, on metro on bus, there are many people they take phone, money, you know, something like that, so I put it, my phone and my paper, my important paper, [indecipherable], it's very important, so I put it in and under abaya [gestures concealing it]. I be alone so I have to find some way, haha."*

Rania's reflections on exploring Athens on her own highlights the risk and asymmetries of access for women in unfamiliar spaces. Rania notes that she usually asks her cousin to pick up her data plan. Similarly, other informants said that they ask friends or in-laws to make purchases for them, rather than navigate unfamiliar Greek cities alone or with small children. Nadia, another informant, told me that her phone was stolen *"in Athens in metro."*

> Alex: No! Did you get it back?
> *Nadia: No*
> Alex: How did you feel when it was taken?
> *Nadia: I am very sad.*
> Alex: Why?
> *Nadia: I don't have more money for phone new but after I take it money from Red Cross, I get I take one*
> Alex: You got a new phone?
> *Nadia: Yes.*

> Alex: That's good. Ohhh I'm sorry that happened to you.
> *Nadia: (laughs)*

Both Rania and Nadia make light of risky situations, such as being lost in a big city, or having your phone stolen. However, in both situations Rania and Nadia emphasise the importance of having a smartphone. When Nadia's phone was taken, she used part of her Red Cross allowance to purchase a new. This would have required her to adjust budget for the month in order to accommodate the cost of purchasing a new phone. However, Nadia determined that spending the money on a new phone was necessary. For Nadia, and other refugees, smartphones are seen as a basic need, equal to, if not more important than, food and shelter (Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 11). Overall, informants agreed that mobile phones were *"so important,"* with, Rania emphasising their importance for *"alone women."*

For those who choose to forego data plans (though this was not the case for any of my informants), residents must go outside in order to access internet. This means that at night, in the rain, during a blizzard, or during an extreme heat spell, residents must choose between going outside to get a signal, so that they can communicate with friends and family, or staying inside without mobile contact, sometimes without even human contact, in the case of those who live alone. This poses even greater challenges for disabled residents like Delal. The gendered nature of the camp's communicative infrastructure often makes women dependent on male relatives and friends in camp. Lulu says that she calls her nephew for help *"every day, all the time."*

Racialised and gendered space

In my methodological section, I briefly touched on ethnic relations in camp. Now, I would like to return to a statement I made earlier with regard to a certain attitude at camp – *although two people might have been born in Syria, if one was ethnically Arab and one was Kurdish, this difference would be called out.* Farah, 27, is from Aleppo. She lives in camp with her three children; her husband lives in Germany. After she drops her children off at the child friendly space, she likes to come to the WS for *chai* or *café*. Farah does not speak English, but she and I are able to communicate through gestures, my broken Arabic, and the help of Amira and Jamila, two women related to Farah through marriage. Like Farah, Jamila's husband lives in Germany. Amira's husband lives with her in camp, along with their two children, but she also hopes to be relocated to Germany. Due to their university educations, Amira and Jamila are near fluent in English. Farah, on the other hand, did not attend university. She would have liked to, but neither she nor the other girls in her family were permitted to pursue an education past primary school. One day, during an activity in the WS, Farah, Amira, Jamila, and I were drinking coffee. On the

opposite side of the room, two young women were playing on their phones, speaking and giggling loudly with one another. At one point, one of the women let out a particularly shrill laugh. I turned to Farah, Amira, and Jamila, and asked rhetorically, "Wow, I wonder what's so funny?" Amira cheekily replied, *"Farah would know…"* I was a bit confused. I could tell that she was teasing Farah, but I could not understand why. So, I asked. Amira replied, *"Farah understands Kurdish."* In Arabic, she asked Farah what the women were saying. Farah was silent. Now, my curiosity was piqued. The majority of Syrian Arabs that I had met at camp did not speak or understand Kurdish. "How does Farah know Kurdish?" I asked. *"Farah **is** Kurdish,"* replied Amira. By this time, Farah had made herself small. She would not make eye contact with any of us, she kept her gaze low. Even though she did not speak English, she knew enough to know what had just happened. Her ethnic background, which she had not offered up willingly, had been exposed. She felt shamed (Ahmed, 2014, p. 104). Farah always spoke in Arabic, never in Kurdish. She did not socialise with the Kurdish women at camp. She always wore the hijab (which was often worn by Arab women at camp, but rarely by Kurdish women). *"Her husband is Arab,"* Amira continued. Although pointing out Farah's ethnic background may seem innocuous, the revelation was not meant to point out an interesting fact. The function of the revelation was to shame Farah, who did not wish for her Kurdish background to be public knowledge. Although Farah passed for an Arab woman, her Kurdish background was something that could – and would – be used against her at opportune times.

Since leaving camp, I have kept in touch with Farah through WhatsApp. I send her photos of myself and my family and write messages using Google translate. She writes back to me in Arabic. Her reunification application was accepted shortly after I left, and in the summer, shortly after Ramadan, she and her three children joined her husband in Germany. In October, I visited Farah and her family in their new home. I had lost touch with Amira and Jamila, so I asked her how they were. *"Problem"* she replied in English. Apparently, all three of them had been resettled in Germany. Farah had expected them to all keep in touch, as they had at camp, but Amira and Jamila stopped replying to her messages once they got to Germany. She had spoken to them once or twice since their resettlement.

To prepare for our meeting, I had practised a few Arabic phrases for her. Likewise, she had been practising her English. We spoke a bit in broken Arabic and English. Her husband added German to the mix, as he had been taking classes for some months. Unfortunately for him, my Arabic is better than my German, which is not saying much. He brought out three phones and opened Google Translate on each of them, so that the three of us could communicate. He would speak into the phone in Arabic and Google would translate his speech

into English. Often though, the phone would mishear him, so he would type out his sentence. Farah, though, was having none of it. She did not like using the phone to translate. She preferred for us to speak the way we had in camp, using gestures. Farah prepared a large meal of kousa mahshi (cored zucchini stuffed with ground meat), declaring *"Farah food, the best."* She was not wrong. The time passed quickly though, and I had to leave by a certain time in order to make it back to Berlin, where I was staying. She said that I could stay over, but I told her I had to go. The two of us had looked forward to this meeting for months, and now, after about two hours, it was time for me to go. We said our goodbyes, hoping to see each other soon. Unfortunately, I have not seen her since, though we still keep in touch on WhatsApp.

Visiting Farah was bittersweet. Farah waited over a year to be reunited with her husband. In camp, she could not wait to get to Germany. As soon as possible, she wanted to resume their life together, to start a new life together, a good life, a better life. Yet, her life in Germany is not necessarily better, or easier, than her life was in Greece, or in Syria. It is better in that she, her husband, and her children no longer endure the pain of separation. They all live together in a secure, private apartment. However, in the small German town where they have been resettled, there are few resources available to them. At camp, Farah had access to doctors and UN workers who either spoke Arabic or had translators with them. There were language classes, exercise classes, arts classes, free day care. By no means do I wish to romanticise the refugee camp; however, now Farah lives in a small community in East Germany, in a town that is notoriously racist and xenophobic. While there are more transit options available to her, her mobility is still significantly restricted by the sparse transit schedule. She finds the weather very cold. She tells me that she finds the German people in her town to be very unwelcoming – wrapping her arms tightly around her to signal their standoffishness and shaking her head. The Germans in her community do not speak to her. The fact that Farah has been resettled and yet still feels isolated makes her feel even more lonely. This feeling of exclusion is further worsened by the fact that the limited family she has in Germany does not speak to her either.

Her husband attends German language classes, but Farah does not. They have submitted the necessary documents to send their children to school, but the children are not yet enrolled. For now, they wait – an experience that is all too familiar. Farah spends her days at home with the three children. When I was there, I noticed that there were not many children playing outside in the neighbourhood, there were not many people outside in general. When all of her children are enrolled at school, Farah should begin her German classes. However, for now, she is responsible for the children and maintaining the household. Farah's experiences both at camp and in her new home demonstrate the ways that spaces are not only racialised, but also gendered.

Digital surveillance

During my fieldwork, I befriended a young woman named Yasmin. We met when she came to the WS looking for materials to create an anniversary gift for her husband. She did not become one of my informants; however, she spoke English fluently, and we spoke frequently about exploitation, NGOs, mobility, and asylum procedures. Yasmin, like many residents I met, had a desire to be resettled in Canada. However, Canada was "not on the list" – the list consisting of EU relocation countries. Yasmin told me about various scams she had seen on Facebook. Once, she went so far as sharing her credit card information, but she was able to cancel the transaction before any money was taken from her account. Another time, while we were talking, her phone rang. She asked me to answer it, as it was a "Canadian scammer" and she wanted me to tell them to stop calling.

After I left camp, Yasmin and I continued to keep in touch through Facebook and Instagram. Around the end of November/early December, Yasmin went quiet online. She stopped posting on social media. The messages I sent her were undelivered. On Facebook Messenger, my message shows a white circle with a blue outline and a blue checkmark.

○ : A blue circle means that your message is sending

⊘ : A blue circle with a check means that your message has been sent

● : A filled-in blue circle with a check means that your message has been delivered

● : A small version of your friend or contact's photo will pop up below the message when they've read it

In one of our last conversations, Yasmin told me that, because they had come into Greece illegally (to avoid being coerced into giving away biometric data, such as their fingerprints), UNHCR had stopped giving them remittances. Yasmin and her family were told that they needed to go back to the islands and restart the process, despite having been in Greece for over a year. She had asked me for information about applying for asylum in Canada. Since Canada is mostly accepting Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan (and not Greece), I sent her some information about private sponsorship. She told me she was also considering travelling overland to the Netherlands, which she estimated would cost them €2500, on top of the €5500 they had already paid to get them this far. For this reason, her and her husband were considering returning to Turkey. When I asked her what she wanted, she told me *"I want to be in Europe / But I have no solution."* I have not spoken to Yasmin in months now and I wonder where her and her

family are, and whether they are safe. I hope that the reason she is absent on social media is because she is trying to evade Frontex and other border regimes, but I do not know.

4.4   Time

There was often a feeling of lethargy at camp. Unlike the islands, there was no emergency situation in camp – most people had already been in Greece for some time, and had passed through other camps before reaching this one. Typically, people did not arrive unexpectedly or at strange hours, or require immediate medical care. Life was somewhat monotonous and routine. Many residents said that they had trouble sleeping at night and went to bed late. They often slept through the morning, waking around 12:00, and started their days slowly, gently. At one point, volunteers in the WS discussed whether we should continue with daily outreach, since the schedule of activities was the same each week. We wondered whether we were a nuisance to the women, knocking on their isoboxes every day at noon. However, when we asked residents whether this was the case, the majority said that they liked our daily check-ins, and the opportunity to have a quick chat, or share *kafe* (coffee), *chai* (tea), or a light meal. Moreover, despite the consistency of our schedule, some residents were invariably surprised to learn that, *alyawm suf alssaet alwahida* (today wool [for knitting] one o'clock), in spite of the fact that, each week, knitting was always on this day, at this time. Given the uncertainty of their futures and their protracted experience of waiting, there simply was no need to keep track of time. In this way, residents' relationship to time was fundamentally different from the actors and NGOs in the camp, who desired structure for their schedules. Residents had an ambivalent relationship to time. While many of my informants could tell me exactly how long they had been in camp for (down to the day), they could not tell me the schedule of activities for the week. Although residents looked hopefully towards the future and travelling onwards, there was often a reluctance to plan ahead in the context of life at camp. Residents preferred to imagine that they would be leaving camp soon.

Nature photography and borders

During the photo elicitation exercise, I found photographs of nature, particularly images of the sky, to be quite popular. In our interviews, informants frequently noted the colours of sunsets and skies, as well as the overall beauty of the outdoors.

In this section, I have included three relevant photos from these interviews. The images themselves are beautiful – a pastel sunset over a wintery Greek landscape, a breathtaking waterfall and its lush surroundings, a bright sunny sky peaking between tall green trees. Each has its own story – meaningful in different ways, depending on the person who took the photograph.

For Lulu, the photo of the sunset is her favourite *"Because I see it's very… beautiful."* She likes the way the light changes as the sun goes down, noting *"This colour, I like – I love this."* She says that looking at the photo makes her *"very very happy"* However, the photo is also special for another reason. She shared it with her husband, who made it his WhatsApp profile picture. Lulu laughs when she tells me this, as though to downplay it, but she also lights up, and I get the sense that this small action on his part is not insignificant to her.
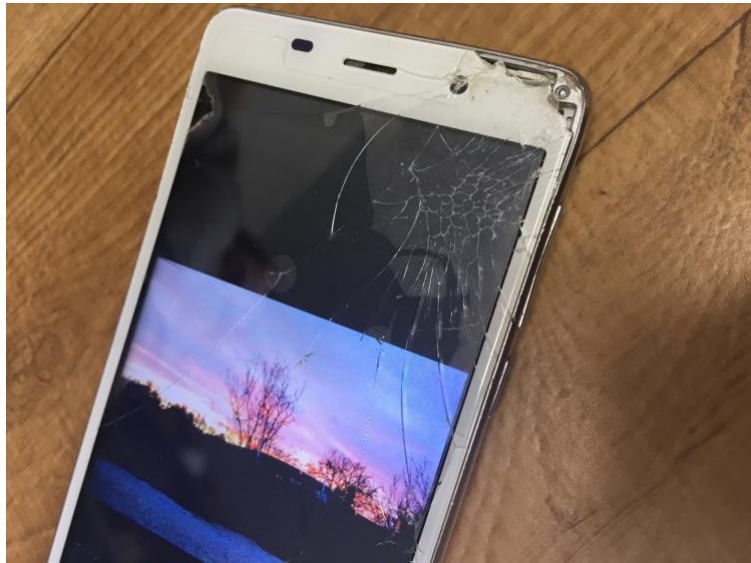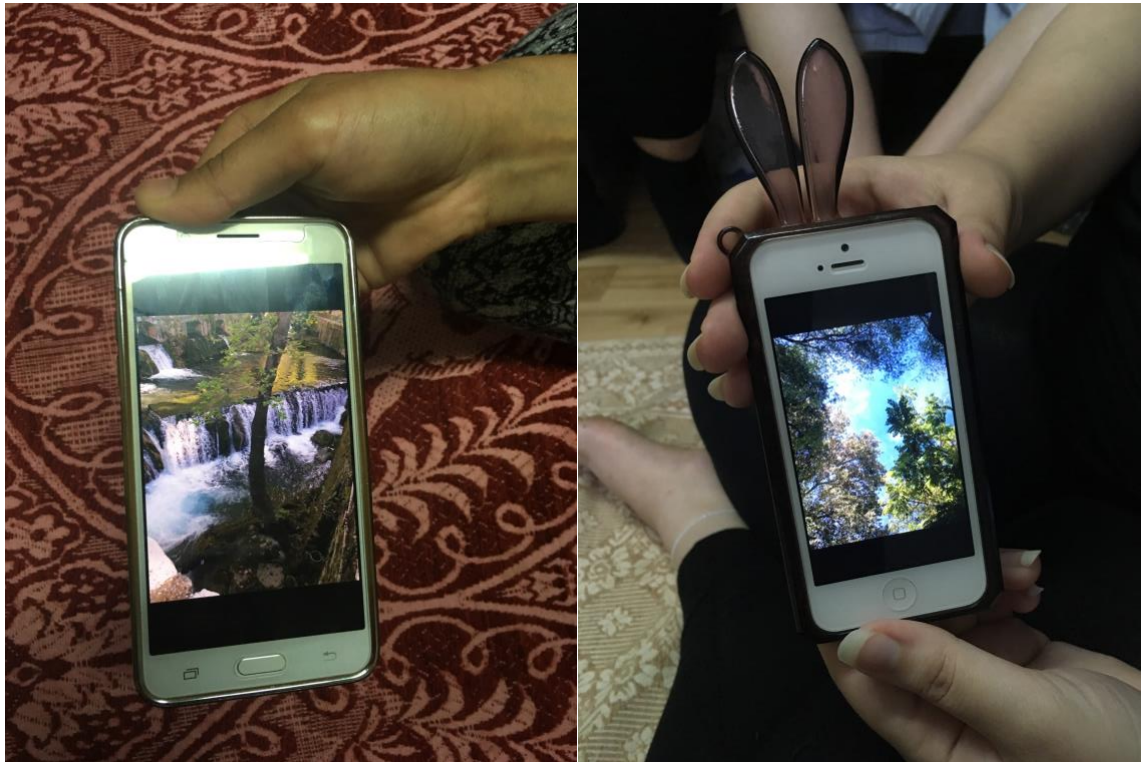
For Amina, the photo of the waterfall reminds her of a happy memory – a day trip that she, her sisters, and some volunteers took, one month earlier, to a nearby village in Greece. For Rozhin, this particular photo of the sky was taken after her arrival on the islands, following her and her family's boat crossing.

> Rozhin: *"In Chios, we are waiting for the bus. And I look the sky and take the picture."*
> Alex: "How do you feel when you look at it?"
> Rozhin: *"I'm mostly just like uh… fly. Just like flying, fly in the sky… like free. I don't know, make me happy, the sky make me happy."*

Rozhin's statement is one of hope and optimism. She literally (and metaphorically) looks up, to a space beyond her immediate reach, and imagines herself there. She looks toward a future where she is free to move without obstructions. The sky is a place of possibility that brings comfort and reassurance during times of struggle and uncertainty. The sky is borderless, it is an open terrain, an escape. It is perhaps for these reasons that it figures prominently in so many informants' photos and videos.

Looking beyond the image

The images I have selected are not only re-presentations of informants' photographs, but documentations of research encounters. Looking beyond the images on the mobile screens, we see the light, textures, and surrounding environments of the spaces where the image of the image

was captured – the wood flooring of Lulu's isobox, the colourful carpets laid down to personalise family caravans, a cracked phone screen from when Lulu's son played with and dropped her mobile phone, Rozhin's family members, her perfectly manicured nails, and her quirky personal phone case. Each of these details carries weight and significance – among other things, they represent choices, love, belonging, and autonomy, all within a space where such things seem impossible.

Youth making meaning

Since leaving the refugee camp, I have maintained contact with several informants. Many of the youth I interviewed are active on social media and have since added me on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. I have noticed that these young women frequently share photos and videos of the natural environment on their social media accounts. Informants often share videos of water, mountains, trees, and the sky. In these images, informants themselves are not pictured; however, the images are distinctly theirs, shot from their perspective, as though we are seeing what they are seeing, through their eyes. These images of nature appear to be a form of escape. Informants frequently share videos where they walk through quiet areas of camp, or film landscapes through the closed windows of moving vehicles. It is common for traditional Arabic or Kurdish music to accompany these nature videos, which are typically shared on Snapchat or in Instagram stories. The fleeting nature and momentariness of these Snapchat and Instagram stories, paired with the musical accompaniment creates a sense of longing. Perhaps this is because the images disappear and become mere memories in twenty-four hours. These ephemeral images evoke waiting as affect; however, they are not static. The camera is always oriented upwards or forwards, active or in motion, and this produces a feeling of hope.
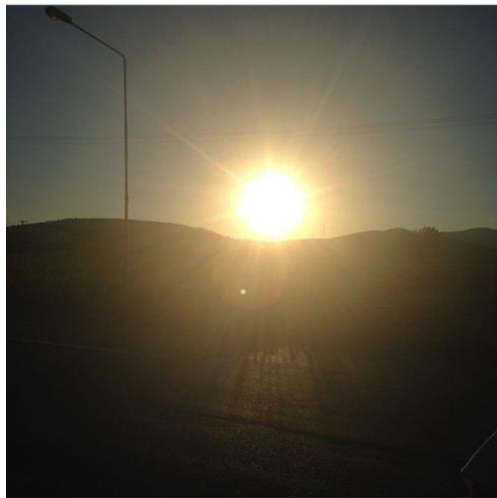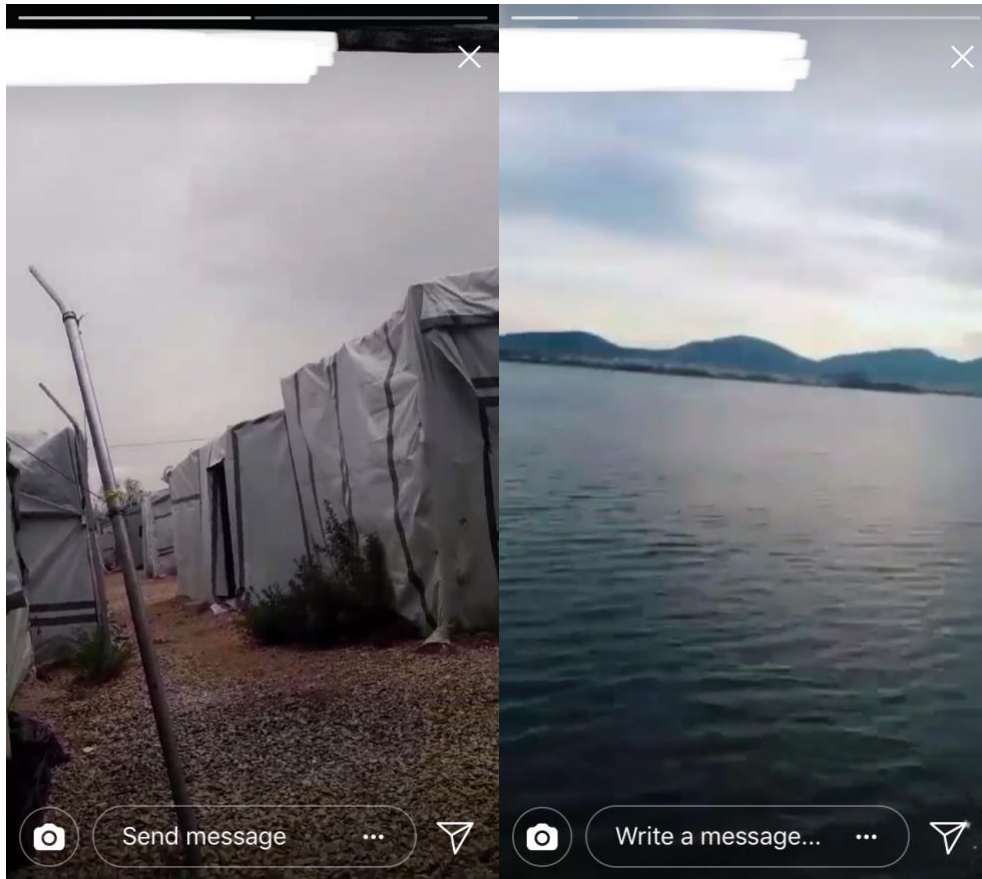
Quantity vs. quality of time

Informants implicitly distinguished between quantity and quality of time. Youth, in particular, felt that they used their phones more before, when they had friends nearby and used their phones to help manage a robust social life. Even though youth noted that they use their phone "all the time" at camp, this endless time was valued less. This is evident in a conversation I had with mother and daughters, Delal, 41, Awaz, 20, and Rozhin, 19. All three women agreed that they used their phone more often when they lived in Iraqi Kurdistan. When asked why they felt like they used their phones less here, they responded:

> *Rozhin: "Because I'm shy here."*
> *Awaz: "[In Kurdistan] we talk a lot and we do Snapchat a lot, we going out every*
> *night."*
> *Rozhin: "Every time, yea, out."*
> Alex: But here you just don't… so?
> *Rozhin: No, and we just try to take a picture… of this.*

In this passage, Awaz and Rozhin express "a longing for the past when life was better, but this coincides with in [sic.] the recurring emphasis that there is 'no future'" in their former homes (Twigt, 2018, p. 10). Neither Awaz nor Rozhin wish to return to Iraq; however, they also long

for better days from when they were in Iraq. Awaz and Rozhin experience negative affective feeling from their smartphone use – in camp, being "always on" significantly enhances their "ambient awareness of distant others" and the resulting silences toward them (Madianou, 2014b, p. 677). The absence of activities, likeminded peers, and a future away from their present circumstances makes them feel lonely. For Awaz and Rozhin, "timeless time" (Castells, 2010) is oppressive. It is important to note the ways that "timeless time" is experienced by some and not by others, and what this means for personal emotional well-being.

Memory-making and ambivalent processes

For informants, remembering is an ambivalent process – tinged with joy and sorrow. Nadia, 23, is from Deir ez-Zor, in eastern Syria. Before the war, she studied Arabic in university. Her, her husband, and her oldest daughter have been in Greece for one year and three months. Nadia shows me photos of her and her husband in Syria. Her hair is dyed blonde and she wears nice clothing. In one picture, she wears a black dress, and stands elegantly at the top of the stairs. Her hair is nicely styled, and she has applied lots of makeup. In another photo, she and her husband pose for a photo with their first daughter.

> *Nadia: "this one baby the best. … This is look Shahd, the first baby, and Muhammad here, and me very happy in Syria, but now no."*
> Alex: "No?"
> *Nadia: "Now, I am very sad, hahaha, look me here [referencing photo] and look now… This [photo] is very nice, but now... I'm very sad. Muhammad change, Shahd change, me change, nothing... no house."*

For Nadia, this image fills her with good feeling and bad feeling – recalling joyful memories that are now distant can be painful. However, remembering was not always a painful act for informants. For Rania, taking photos and looking at old photos is somewhat therapeutic.

> *Rania: "Yes, I love to uh take pictures here or in the island I have many pictures in Turkey I have pictures in Syria because the pictures when you watch it after week after month after year or many years uh that feel you feeling you remember what you feeling like this and you miss this day that days."*

Rania's pictures of Turkey act as "happy objects," which produce positive affective value (Ahmed, 2010). She alludes to memory's affective, embodied, and sensorial dimensions when she describes how *"you remember what you feeling."*

When looking at her wedding photo, another informant, Fatima articulates a longing for the past, a nostalgia for a time that is no more.

> Alex: "When you look at the photo, how do you feel? What do you think about?"
> *Fatima: *deep breath* "Uhhh mmm I hope back, I yes"*
> Alex: "You remember."

> *Fatima: "One you know after wedding, I want back, back before eight years, no children, just me and my husband."*

Remembering, and reflecting on change and the passage of time involves intense vulnerability – both vulnerability in sharing experiences, as well as vulnerability in confronting the joy, pain, fear, anxiety, and sadness that arise when working through memories. The tensions produced by these emotional responses, in turn, produce ambivalent responses. Memory is not linear; rather, memories are entangled in unique histories, cultures, and social practices of individuals, communities, and experiences. Given the uncertainty of the future, it should come as no surprise that informants find comfort in nostalgic social practices such as remembering. It is a way of enduring.

Chapter 5   Conclusions

Waiting as affect

Many of the women I met at camp continue to wait. Some know what they are waiting for – for example, the outcome of their reunification or relocation application. For others, the "something" that they are waiting for is less clear – many women I met at camp have still not had a first interview, and they are no closer to being relocated within Europe than they were when I left camp at the beginning of May. The transnational connectivity provided by ICTs not only allows informants to cross national and digital borders, it also allows informants to maneuver constraints set by time.

Lulu and her family experience this firsthand. Not only do Lulu and her son live in a geographically different place from her husband, they live in different time zones (albeit, only a one hour difference), more importantly, they live in different temporalities. All three of them experience and engage with time in different ways. For their son, who is less than a year old, time is something else entirely, as his brain, personal, and sensory awareness continue to develop at rapid rates. The experience of living in different places and on different times is more poignantly felt by Lulu and her husband. Lulu experiences the anguish of waiting in a place where time stands still, where there is no reason to plan further than the day ahead. Time is marked by scheduled food deliveries, activities organised by various camp actors, the bus schedule to Athens – none of these events are things she has control over, they are all determined by some other body. Time is wrung out and balled up. She watches her son grow, documenting every moment of his young life, and sends these moments to her husband, which become memories as soon as she presses send.

Lulu's husband also experiences an anguish of waiting; however, his experience of waiting is different from hers. He navigates the bureaucracy of the German asylum procedure, attends German language classes, maintains the apartment. He waits to finally meet his son, who he has only ever seen on the screen of his phone. The last time he saw Lulu, she was pregnant. His relationship with his son has been entirely mediated through his and Lulu's mobile phones – for him, each phone call, picture, and video only increases his desire to be physically co-present with his family (Twigt, 2018, p. 8). Perhaps, most pertinent to Lulu's and her husband's (shared) experience of waiting is the time they spend waiting for the result of their family reunification application. However, until that phone call comes, they will settle for waiting for the next photo or video.

For refugee women, smartphone use is an embodied and emotional practice. Among other things, smartphone use facilitates refugee women's family practices, negotiation of space, and relation to memory. Waiting as affect is an embodied experience, mediated by ICTs, such as smartphones, and tempered both spatially and temporally. Whether it involves waiting for a scheduled voice call, or waiting for WhatsApp's single grey checkmark to double into two grey checkmarks and, finally, into two blue checkmarks (see image below) there is always an anxiety stirred by waiting for news or information (from loved ones), and there are always (micro) wait times within, and further compounded by, these moments of waiting. This underscores the ways in which waiting is multiple, personal, and situated.

- ✓ Message successfully sent.
- ✓✓ Message successfully delivered to the recipient's phone.
- ✓✓ The recipient has read your message.

The examples presented in the empirical section illustrate waiting to be an embodied experience and affective phenomenon. Waiting is more than a practice or state of being, it is a lived emotional experience that takes up space and involves endurance. Here, I wish to return to the concept of "making do," and propose "making do" as a tactic for negotiating the affect of waiting. Making do is about finding ways, however small, for creating space within oppressive structures. Rania participates in "making do" through her non-news consumption, which mitigates the bad feeling produced by her separation from her family in Syria. Lulu and her husband use selfies to "make do" with physical forms of distances and create new intimate forms of space-making. Youth like Rozhin use nature photography to transcend borders and reframe geographies through their situated and contested perspectives. It is worth further exploring the

ways that micro-acts of agency, and so-called "mundane practices" are used to promote wellbeing and cope with the affective experience of waiting.

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