

**“Greece is like a door, you go through it to get to Europe”**

**Understanding Afghan migration to Greece**

Deliverable 7.1.

Case Study: Migration System 3 (Afghanistan)



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HELLENIC FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN AND FOREIGN POLICY (ELIAMEP)

49, Vas.Sofias Avenue, 106 76 Athens, Greece

Tel.: (+30) 210 7257110, Fax: (+30) 210 7257114, e-mail: [eliamep@eliamep.gr](mailto:eliamep@eliamep.gr)

url: [www.eliamep.gr](http://www.eliamep.gr)

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# «Greece is like a door, you go through it to get to Europe»

## Understanding Afghan migration to Greece

**Dr. Angeliki Dimitriadi**

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## 1. Introduction

Greece is a critical pathway of entry for migrants crossing from Asia and Africa. In 2011 it accounted for almost 90% of all irregular apprehensions in Europe (FRA 2011). The Greek-Turkish sea border initially (2004-2009) and eventually the land border (2009-2012) bore the brunt of arrivals. The main nationalities since 2004 are the Albanians, the Afghans, followed by the Pakistanis, the Iraqi Kurds, the Somalis and recently the Syrians. Despite deterrence policies, border patrols and overall difficulty in reaching the external borders of the Union, flows decreased only temporarily and spiked once more post-2012 largely due to the internal conflict in Syria.

Since 2012 the maritime borders are again the focus of arrivals. The majority are of Syrian origin; however Afghans continue to be present in significant numbers in the migrant vessels, as are Eritreans and Somalis. Though the figures, as we will discuss below, have reduced, the Afghans remain the third nationality in terms of apprehensions in Greece<sup>1</sup>. Their routes might have adapted to border policies but their destinations remain EU Member States making the understanding of motivations, migratory paths and decision making process critical in the design of policies.

How do migration control policies affect the plans and actions of prospective (and actual) irregular migrants? And why some policies are more successful than others? These are the central questions addressed by the IRMA research project (The Governance of Irregular Migration: States, Actors and Intermediaries), that the present report attempts to answer. By outlining the **factors**, **actors** and **policies** we hope to acquire a better understanding of the interaction between policies and their intended recipients; in this case Afghan irregular migrants.

The main issues highlighted in the report<sup>2</sup> are the role of asylum as primary reason for migration, and the importance of capital as the main parameter of successful migration. The smuggler is the key actor underscoring all discussions, holding multiple roles; from facilitator of mobility, to source of information, or disruptor to the migratory project. The choice of destination and the limited information informants actually have, are discussed, as well as the role of Turkey as a hub for collection of information, but mostly of money to continue the journey. The border crossing for both entry and exit is discussed in relation to policies in Greece and particular border fencing and increased deterrence of entry. Finally, the text highlights the issue of detention, as the key policy in place at the time of writing that appears to have impacted heavily both the migratory route but also the decision of Afghans to leave Greece, either via transit (where possible) or via return to Afghanistan.

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<sup>1</sup> The Syrians ranked first in 2014, followed by the Albanians. Afghans were third in apprehensions.

<sup>2</sup> The project and its outcomes would not have been made possible without the willingness of migrants to entrust me with their personal stories, the interpreters who provided access to the communities and the organisations on the ground who offered safe environments for the interviews as well as a wealth of information. I am indebted to all for their contribution and assistance. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the continuous assistance from the Hellenic Police and the team from the Aliens Division Migration and Administrative Measures, who ensured access to the pre-removal facility of Amygdaleza and to data requested throughout the three years of the project.

Thus, we will seek to discuss Afghan migration to Greece and in line with the main questions of the IRMA project, attempt to analyze the decision-making process of Afghan migrants, from the decision to migrate, to the choice of destination and the journey itself. The analysis follows an almost chronological trajectory, in line with the informant's discourse.

## 1.1 Methodological approach and research sample

The literature on migration, migration processes and migration industry is vast (see for example Kritz et al., 1992; Richmond, 1988; Faist 2000; Massey et al., 1993; Singer & Massey 1998; Castles & Miller, 2003; Bakewell, 2010) and there seems to be a tendency to divide the subject of study, into either 'voluntary' or 'forced' migrants, refugees or economic migrants. For those forced to flee protracted conflict or persecution migration theory is usually set aside, or as Bakewell notes " [...] We may try to explore the political, economic or social factors which forced them to move, but we do not need to explain their arrival in terms of their exercising agency. Indeed to go too far towards explanation and ascribing any agency to such people may undermine their case for refugee status" (2010:1690).

There are many theoretical frames in which we can place migration in our attempt to understand it. Most approaches focus on either the dominance of the structural constraints or the role of the individual (agency) in the analysis. The post-structuralist approach, dominant to this day and utilized in the present research, seeks a balance, acknowledging that migration is a dynamic process (Bakewell, 2010; Castles, De Haas, and Miller, 2014) where migrants are not victims of the structures in which they are embedded, but some have the opportunity to be more in charge of their movement. It should be noted that in fact, a significant volume of the world's population lacks the capability to migrate (Hyndman, 2012; Massey, 1993). There is thus, an interaction between the policies governing migration, the capabilities of migrants and their aspirations that shapes and constructs different migratory paths, flows and categories of migration. An example of this are mixed migrant flows.

They remind us that migration is neither linear nor clear cut, which is the case of the Afghans. Motives are often mixed. Migration is a fluid process, largely a result of interactions between multiple elements including the individual and a set of processes and structures. Acknowledging this in his analysis of the structure-agency interrelations, Bakewell (2010) raises a critical point; **policies and legal frameworks impact how we treat and respond to the categories of migrants we construct.** How we interpret and understand migration shapes in turn how we respond to migrants. They, in turn, respond to how we categorize and thus approach them.

Migrants interact with state actors and policies (of the destination and/or transit countries) as well as with non-state, local or transnational actors (NGOs, international organisations, smuggling networks, employers, family and friends). Thus, the interviews attempted to look at how migrants make and change their plans and strategies for migrating at destination countries and which actors affected their decision making and actions, and how (especially in terms of information sharing and organisation of the trip).

A total of **53** interviews took place in Greece and Turkey, the majority with the use of an interpreter<sup>3</sup>. Interviews in Turkey took place primarily in the homes of the participants. In Greece, access was much harder and problematic. The Operation Xenios Zeus<sup>4</sup> and the systematic apprehension and detention of Afghan irregular arrivals made those in urban centers fearful of detention. Those who had managed to avoid police detection feared being apprehended and refused to circulate in public, making reaching them particularly hard. The meetings in Athens took place primarily in organizations' offices that kindly 'hosted' the interviews to offer a more secure environment to participants. Additionally, a number of the interviews took place in the pre-departure detention facility of Amygdaleza, which held at the time a significant percentage of Afghans. Permission was always given by the Hellenic Police and interviews were always conducted with an interpreter that was not working (or cooperating) with the Police and the detention facility to ensure privacy of data.

Overall the target group was split along three 'categories':

- Those who had recently arrived or lived in Greece irregularly, where a total of 30 interviews took place (25 in Athens and 5 in the island of Paros, where in the past a small Afghan community lived.)
- Those who participated in voluntary return program of IOM and were about to return to Afghanistan (11 in total, of which only one took place at IOM's offices in Athens and the rest in the detention facility of Amygdaleza) and
- In transit migrants, waiting in Turkey to cross to Greece (12 individual interviews took place in a suburb of Istanbul).

Participants were diverse in terms of gender and age and even country of departure.

The overwhelming majority was **single men**. Approximately 18 participants were either married with children or recently widowed with children. Indeed, one noticeable change of the last three years, confirmed in the sample, is the increase in family arrivals from Afghanistan primarily and Iran, as well as members of the Afghan middle-class that developed during the presence of foreign troops in the country. The living standards in Afghanistan, lack of employment and uncertainty but also the change towards the Afghans in the neighboring host countries resulted in the migration of professionals and families towards Europe. Women do not usually migrate alone, though there have been recorded cases of women who transit from Greece in the company of their children. Only **five women** were interviewed for this study. Of those two were accompanied by their husbands, one was single and two were widowed. Only one interviewee was an unaccompanied minor aged 16 years old<sup>5</sup>. Otherwise, the majority of interviewees fell under the 17-25 age groups, which means that the sample of the present study corresponds to a fairly young population.

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<sup>3</sup> All interviews were transcribed and then inputted in the MAXQDA software for analysis. Nicknames have been assigned to interviewees.

<sup>4</sup> The operation itself did not result in a large-scale detention of Afghan irregular migrants. For example from August until mid-February of 2013 (02/15/2013) only 252 Afghans were detained in the framework of Xenios Zeus according to data provided by the Hellenic police.

<sup>5</sup> Unaccompanied minors are a significant group of arrivals that did not feature in the present sample. There is no record of the total number of unaccompanied minors in Greece. One way of recording them is through the available positions in reception centers for minors and the requests for accommodation placed to the National Center for Social Solidarity (NCSS). In the second trimester of 2014 alone there were 271 recorded Afghan UAMs that were forwarded to NCSS for placement and another 65 single-parent families of Afghan origin.

Employment is rarely mentioned in the interviews in Greece. Those in detention facilities could not work and many did not have the opportunity to do before being apprehended. Of those free and especially recent arrivals, work was not an option due to high rates of unemployment even in the informal market but also of fear of being detected by the Police. Thus, employment is discussed as a motivating factor for migration but rarely features in the experience of life in Greece.

Almost 80% of the sample had migrated directly from Afghanistan, with the remaining 20% having arrived from Iran (with two exceptions from Pakistan). This is an interesting finding, particularly the high percentage of migrants originating directly from Afghanistan and secondarily from Iran. Greece tended to be in the past mainly on the receiving end of Afghans from Pakistan and Iran, either second generation refugees or migrants in secondary movement (for an analysis of migration to these countries, see Dimitriadi 2013). Both countries reversed significantly their hospitality towards the Afghans in the last decade, pushing towards return programs accompanied with policies of exclusion. Unable to own property, attend schools, find employment, faced with deportation (including second generation refugees), poverty and social exclusion, as well as racism especially in Iran, many Afghans began the long journey in search of new homelands. The current fieldwork shows that there is in fact a renewed trend of migration directly from Afghanistan to Greece and Europe.

## 2. Aspirations and migration

Staying in one place or being mobile can take place out of necessity, force and/or 'choice' (Ahmed, Cataneda et al., 2003) and can depend on specific empowering or disabling power relations (Cresswell, 1996).

There is, thus, a fundamental gap between the aspiration to move and the ability to do so (Appadurai, 2001; Carling, 2014) and the migratory project (de Haas, 2011) when it takes place, does so as a product of the interaction between structure and agency. Precisely because this is a dynamic process, its outcome is also unpredictable. This approach is particularly useful in understanding Afghan migration from departure to return. The Afghans showcase remarkable agency, particularly important in the context of transit migration; i.e. an uncertain process in length and duration interplay between mobility and immobility.

The decision to migrate for the Afghans is a direct product of the interplay between structural factors and individual aspirations. The ability to do so, as we will discuss later on, is a different component. Migrants offered a primary reason for leaving, usually insecurity and secondary reasons, from economic to social. This is not surprising, since the movement of Afghans is part of their cultural tradition, where "multidirectional, cross-border movements and the ongoing, cyclical nature of migration blur the boundaries between 'refugee' and 'voluntary migrant'" (Monsutti 2006:7; Monsutti, 2007). To understand the decision, we need to understand the **context** in which it takes place.

From the invasion of the Soviet troops, to the creation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan by the Taliban, the intervention of Allied Forces as a response to 9/11 2001, the Bonn Agreement and the first elected government, Afghans had to adjust to continuous internal conflicts and financial and political insecurity. Migration has shaped the social and economic fabric of the country, where mobility became a key livelihood strategy (Monsutti, 2008).

Migration and *refugeeism*<sup>6</sup> are not new concepts for the Afghans. For thirty years, they were hosted primarily in Iran and Pakistan; until 2001 they were treated as *prima facie* refugees, known as *mujaherin* in Iran (religious migrants) or under the *pashtunwali* code in Pakistan, which includes the offer of asylum between Pashtuns (Bialczyk, 2008; Dimitriadi, 2013a). **For thirty years, they were offered an elevated status in the receiving societies**, with access to benefits and the possibility of settlement as part of their 'refugee' status. Conditions changed post-2001, when both Iran and

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<sup>6</sup> Refugeeism is a broad term attributed to the process and experience of refugees. It is specifically used here in reference to the 'refugee condition'-an approach which posits that 'refugees move beyond a mixed category of people sharing a certain legal status; they become "a culture", "an identity", a "social world" or "a community"' (Malkki 1995:11). Though Malkki is highly critical of such an approach applied broadly to refugee populations, it is nonetheless useful in relation to the Afghans, in understanding how they assign themselves the refugee status, which appears to be embedded in the identity of their mobility, irrespective of the validity of their claim (which is very often real).

Pakistan radically altered their policies towards the Afghans<sup>7</sup>. The experience and memory of the past, appears to have shaped how they understand and perceive asylum and their claim to the refugee status itself, i.e. by virtue of being Afghan many consider themselves eligible for the refugee status<sup>8</sup>.

In the post-Taliban era, the international community launched one of the largest reconstruction programs and the largest repatriation of refugees in UNHCR's history where more than five million Afghan refugees returned, mostly from Pakistan and Iran (Kronenfeld, 2008; Monsutti, 2008; Dimitriadi, 2013a). Millions of refugees that returned in 2003-2004 did so because of the promise of development and change. They returned primarily to Kabul, where gradually informal settlements sprang up, built by former refugees. The settlements did not meet basic requirements since the government did not allow the provision of structured and long-term assistance in the camps (e.g. to build permanent homes), in an effort to encourage returnees to resettle in their provinces (Dimitriadi 2013). In parallel, absence of job opportunities, housing and escalating conflict in areas with continuous presence of warlords and the return of the Taliban from Pakistan resulted in the re-migration of many returnees.

Nonetheless, transnational networks were built and sustained in the region that encourages and facilitates mobility and cross-border movement. Migration is embedded in the Afghan way of life and can be a strategy of survival for the household, an individual decision for economic, political and social reasons, a way of entering adulthood (see Monsutti, 2008; Stigter & Monsutti, 2005; Monsutti, 2007), or at times all of the above.

## 2.1 Leaving home

Afghanistan was in 2012 the most important source country for people seeking asylum in the industrialized countries (UNHCR, 2013), surpassed in 2013 by the Syrians. Afghans give different and "usually plural reasons for their decision to migrate" (Monsutti, 2005:146), which was confirmed in the present study. According to the President of the Afghan Community of Migrants and Refugees in Greece there are three groups currently on the move;

- the political refugees,
- those who flee for safety reasons areas like Kandahar and are mainly Hazara<sup>9</sup> and finally
- those who leave in search of employment.

In the present sample, almost all informants referred primarily to the **political context** as a main reason for leaving, thus laying claim to the refugee status. References vary from the general to the specific. The generated flows since 2012 were a result partly of the withdrawal of Allied Forces that

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<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch (2002) CLOSED DOOR POLICY: Afghan Refugees in Pakistan and Iran, 14(2), available at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/pakistan/>

<sup>8</sup> This is something that was confirmed with discussions amongst informants and it goes back to the condition of being a refugee (see reference 6).

<sup>9</sup> The Hazaras comprise up to 19 per cent of that country's population. Most are Shiite Muslims, making them a significant religious minority among a predominantly Sunni Muslim population, heavily persecuted by the Taliban. See Monsutti 2005.

left behind a gradually developed middle class and a significant number of Afghans who worked with the international community and were now in danger of Taliban reprisals.

The role of the Taliban was a common theme amongst informants. The stories present a country steeped in corruption and of prevailing insecurity especially in remote areas with warlords and Taliban presence in villages as well as consistent persecution of those associated with the Allied forces (target killings). Migrants repeatedly told stories of siblings being targeted by the Taliban either due to their association with the local police force or for having collaborated with the Allied Forces. Of those threatened, the decision to migrate was reached by the family. In these cases, the individual aspiration tended to mix with the survival strategy and migration was firstly a survival method and secondly a way of achieving a specific goal (either income maximization, education etc.).

An additional factor in the renewed migratory flows, were the aforementioned policies in Iran and Pakistan. Sikeban had migrated twice, firstly from Afghanistan to Iran and then from Iran to Greece.

*“We had documents and children could attend school, at first. But then things became very difficult, the children grew and we had no money for University so we thought to come to Europe”* (Sikeban, female, 38 years old).

Thus, it was not only a question of exclusion or fear of deportation but also of aspirations for the future, specifically the education of children or the individual. The discussion around education is a recurring theme amongst the Afghans. It is not the primary reason but a **secondary** important reason for migration and it is not stand-alone, i.e. education is not a self-fulfilling aspiration but a survival strategy, since it is linked with an elevated economic and social status:

*“of course, with better education you can have a good salary!”* (Tamim, male, 19 years old)

The second common theme was that of **employment** that in turn also generates economic capital. The opportunity for work is heavily associated in the literature, with economic migration, and in many cases it is indeed a process of increasing one's income and bettering one's relative financial position. For the Afghans, however, with few notable exceptions, job opportunities *were not* discussed as the primary factor generating migration. That does not mean that they were regularly employed or well paid (by comparison to Western standards). Rather, most kept low paid jobs and many had been unemployed for months prior to leaving. Yet, unemployment or low paid work was discussed as a result of the conflict or Iran's new policy that limited access to the labor market. Thus, for many, it was the political context that impacted their access to the labor market and in turn, what motivated them to leave. It is perhaps due to this linkage between political situation-(and right of) access to the labor market that explains why for some informants, employment was **embedded in the asylum process**. By being recognized as a refugee, one would also be able to access the labor market. This was much more pronounced amongst informants that originated from Iran, which is likely the product of asylum experience in Iran<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> With regard to employment, recognized refugees could apply for work permit, restricted however to 17 categories of manual labor. Afghans, however, had access to education and received subsidy for gas, food and health coverage (Koepke, 2011), but were restricted in their movement. In the post-2001 setting, restrictions on employment and movement in specific areas/regions of Iran became more pronounced.

Migration was also presented as a result of corruption and/or family vendetta's that affected access to income and thus motivated them to migrate. Several of the respondents cited personal enmities, or blood feuds, as their primary reason for migrating.

Overall, the blending of reasons for migration, from safety to employment and better life form part not only of structural factors but also determinants of migration. The Afghans migrate due to a **combination of factors**; a personal vendetta that has also impacted economic capital, security fears that prohibit access to education, limited rights and irregular status.

To these we need to include individual aspirations, which can be the same or different as the reasons for migrating and act on their own as determinants of mobility. Carling suggests two ways of approaching aspirations in relation to migration: firstly as important factors that affect migration, i.e. though conflict may act as a 'push' factor, the desire for happiness, security and safety or even education are what the individual aspires to *acquire* and thus migrates. Secondly, "migration aspirations describe the conviction that migration is desirable" (Carling, 2014:2), i.e. the said-migrant wishes enthusiastically to migrate entirely voluntarily or migration is considered the best option in the face of conflict, environmental disaster, poverty. Carling uses the term 'aspiration' to "describe this preference for migration over staying, regardless of the reasons" (ibid) and it is a fitting way of approaching also Afghan migration, precisely because they aspire to be mobile both as part of an individual and/or household strategy of survival, betterment, and the pursuit of a different way of life, one heavily associated with the notion of *the refugee*. Aspiring to migrate however is insufficient, without the capability to do.

## 2.2 Capability for migration

Capability to migrate is crucial in all migratory projects (Carling 2014). For migratory flows, like the Afghans, it extends beyond the departure point, to include also the transit stages in Turkey and Greece, since while in transit they can shift from voluntary mobility to involuntary immobility often **due to the impasse between aspiring to be mobile but failing to do so**.

Capabilities in this case are primarily approached as the socio-economic capital that facilitates migration. Since migration is nonlinear and often transitory (i.e. with in-between stops of indeterminable length) at each stage of the journey the balance between aspiration and capability has to be re-examined. Absence of capability to move, results in immobility.

The journey from Afghanistan to Europe costs on average 3-4,000 dollars per person. Prices range for children and women, and depend also on point of departure, complexity of the journey, and border crossings. 99% of all respondents crossed to Turkey and Greece with the assistance of smugglers, paying at various stages different sums (see also Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012). The 'ability' to migrate can also translate into Hear's notion that forms of migration "vary greatly in cost, and therefore access to resources – principally money and social capital – shape the migration strategies that can be pursued" (2004:28). Said differently, **it is not the poorest of the poor that migrate** (van Hear 2004) but those who are either middle class or have some sort of capital (social or financial) that can fund the journey, whether 'economic' migrants or refugees. Thus, like in most migratory projects, in the case of the Afghans also, only those who could access some form of capital undertook the journey.

For the Afghan informants in the present study, the main source of social and economic capital was the family from the immediate to the extended family (uncles, cousins). Roughly three groups emerged from the research:

- Those who were supported directly by the family (often through the sale of goods and in some cases the house and/or land)<sup>11</sup>. Usually the family provides for the sum requested by the smuggler and retains any additional money for its own survival, or the migration of another family member.
- those who were sufficiently covered the journey through personal finances and
- Those who borrowed from friends and extended social networks

The overwhelming majority sold their land, their house and/or furniture, jewelry, cars etc. in order to collect the required sum that in rare cases, reached as high as 10,000 dollars per adult. In the latter cases, however, it seems the entire part of the journey was covered, including transportation and stay in transit stops. Overall an argument can be made that the sample tended to be low or upper middle class migrants and there were cases in the sample of business owners, perhaps an indicator of the middle class that emerged following the fall of the Taliban in the post-2002 Afghanistan.

Where wealth existed, it was openly referred to:

*"...my family wealthy. They sent some money to my uncle"* (Arat, male, 26 years old)

In some cases, the social status of the family in Afghanistan was stressed as critical in relation to access to economic capital:

*"My father was a politician, we had money [...]: we had a tractor and a car, my mother sold them both and sent me the money"* (Rah, male, 19 years old)

The economic capital is not merely a factor for migration but it is essential in organizing the journey. Finding the right **smuggler**, which also links with access to capital, is the other. The smuggler plays a critical role at various stages of the journey and can act as both an initiator and facilitator to the migratory journey. Thus he is essential in the capability aspect of migration.

The social and cultural embeddedness of smuggling became apparent in the research early on. Migrants refer to them as smugglers but mostly as 'agents' of 'facilitators'. Smuggling is perceived as a necessity, a product of border controls and inability to travel legally (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012) and thus, those who offer the opportunity to reach the desired destination provide a business service. Finding the right smuggler is critical in ensuring passage to Europe. Like most businesses, smuggling relies on reputation but also on demand (Kyle & Koslowski, 2001). The Afghans, for example, continue to pay relatively similar sums of money for the crossings to Iran and Turkey. The new routes instead, directly from Turkey to Italy through the use of mother ships (see Dimitriadi, 2014) are relatively new and prices comparatively high, estimated at 7,000 dollars per person, largely due to the protracted conflict in Syria. Yet, the need for the smuggler is uncontested.

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<sup>11</sup> As one of the interpreters explained, it is rare that the entire sum is given to the prospective migrant.

*"...yeah of course [I crossed] with a smuggler. It is not easy to come alone!"* (Isam, male, 26 years old)

The migrants described different experiences with smugglers; in their majority negative either because they did not reach the agreed destination or because they were tricked since

*"smugglers lie. I have so many in my area and I know they lie, I don't trust them."* (Jamal, male, 16 years old).

Perhaps more critical were the cases where the individuals were victimized and at times coerced during the journey by the smuggling network. This seems to be particularly the case in the border crossing between Iran and Turkey (see Dimitriadi 2013a, Triandafyllidou & Maroukis 2012). Migrants explained how either upon arrival to the border the price was raised and unable to pay they were detained by the smugglers until their family produced the money or they were forced to work for the smuggler (assisting usually in the smuggling activity) until the debt was paid (debt bondage).

In sharp contrast are the cases where the smugglers are portrayed as benevolent and/or sources of information. There were cases where the migrants arrived to Greece at zero cost (although these are the rare exceptions) and when asked whether they had to perform other tasks in exchange they categorically denied it. It is unclear whether the relationship between smuggler and migrant can truly be *pro bono*. The absence of payment raises a question of viability; smuggling is essentially a profit-based business and one that relies extensively on 'word of mouth'. Simultaneously it becomes an issue of trust. The monetary exchange 'binds' both participants to complete the agreed service; the smuggler to offer passage and the migrant to pay. The extent to which the passage is truly free, or simply repaid in due time, is something that is worthy of further investigation, since the monetary exchange is largely what 'guarantees' the interaction:

*"I trust the smugglers [...]yes, the criminals are always a step ahead of the police, so if you pay them they know how to take you"* (Rahman, male, 22 years old)

There were no reported cases where the smuggler initiated the migration, i.e. inspired or recruited the migrant to leave. Again, this finding requires further exploration since it challenges a basic assumption of the smuggling process, namely the recruitment. In the case of the Afghans, the recruitment was from the side of the migrants who sought out the smuggler and not vice versa. However, once the choice was made, smugglers contributed in the ability of the individuals to realize their migration project, by bringing them closer to their destination. Thus, they are a critical part of the successful realization of the migratory project and a key element in the aspiration/capability equation.

### 3. Choosing destination

Deciding to migrate is the first step. Choosing destination is the second and to this the social networks and the intermediaries again contribute, this time by encouraging the decision to migrate and affecting the choice of destination. Destination however, is not only a result of information but also of “socially and culturally determined narratives and practices about migration, migrants and destinations within ‘origin’ and ‘transit’ regions” (Timmerman, Heyse and van Mol 2010:6). The migrant will seek to reach a specific destination or a broad region to migrate, depending on the aspirations and capital (economic and social), as well as the dominant narrative in the country of origin and/or transit.

In the discussions with the informants, destinations were discussed as chosen often purposefully, because of the asylum policies they offer, and the possibility to realize certain aspirations (education, welfare etc). A ‘myth’ surrounds Europe, which is largely linked with asylum as we will discuss below.

All informants (Greece and Turkey) were asked to name their original destination. Germany and Sweden were by far the most popular destinations followed by the UK as the following table shows . Greece was only a choice of destination for four informants, three of whom had extended stay in Greece (minimum three years).

**Destination countries of interviewees**

Country/Destination	No of Informants
Germany	14
Sweden	10
UK	6
Europe	4
Turkey-Iran	4
Greece	4
France	3
Italy	2
Austria	1
Luxembourg	1
Switzerland	1
Norway	1
Canada	1
Denmark	1

Three issues stand out in the analysis. Firstly, the role of social networks in disseminating information but also attracting migrants; secondly, the linkage to the asylum processes; and thirdly, the broader myth that surrounds 'Europe' largely built from stories of previously successful migrants.

The role of social networks in migration has been extensively examined by many researchers (see Poros 2008, Castles & Miller 2003, Brettell & Hollifield 2008, Favell 2003). Social networks are important for acquiring information, sharing personal and intimate relationships with peers, and discussing shared beliefs and values. Yet the type of social contact and the type of closeness in the interaction, matters. This was evident in the cases of informants who had a close family member in a country, or a close friend, which in turn determined their choice of the specific destination.

What did the informants know about the countries of choice? Mainly that they were places where their aspirations could be realised, from access to education (a common theme in the discussion of Sweden) to employment opportunities and a 'good life' for Germany and the UK. With few exceptions, all information was relatively vague, referring to a generally better life and possibilities but with no clear and specific understanding of how this can be achieved. In that sense, it is difficult to argue that migrants are well-informed of what to expect in relation to the destination itself.

Bikh was in Greece for a year already when we met. His final destination was the UK. He considered himself an economic migrant, explaining that he left in search of job opportunities. His friends had left five years back and migrated to the UK. He was certain that, when he reached his destination, he would find a job, they would help him "to learn English and life would be good" (Bikh, male, 30 years old). I broached the issue of time; his friends had migrated 5 years ago, and a lot had happened since in British politics, including a steady clam down of borders. It was interesting that time had not factored in the image he was constructing of life in the UK. Information was based on what had happened to those who had gone before him and since he did not know anyone who has migrated since, their stories remained the dominant narrative. Nevertheless, the narrative was 'assisted' by his personal experience, since his area hosted US troops; as a result English is a familiar language for him. He has friends also in Germany and Austria and he would also consider these countries as potential destinations (the UK was the first choice). All three countries were discussed as organized, offering a good life and sufficient care to migrants. Similar findings have been noted in past researches with irregular migrants in transit (Dimitriadi, 2013; Papadopoulou, 2008). The expectations of the 'chosen' countries are high, a product of a broader mythology surrounding Europe, but also of migrant aspirations; motivated by specific desires, it is only to be expected that they construct a specific type of 'imagination' around the life they *will* have (see Hage, 1997) on arrival.

A family we encountered 'stranded' in Greece, was heading from the beginning to Germany, an obvious choice since they had immediate family that migrated there a year earlier. The members in Germany provided the money for the journey to Europe but they were not the main source of information on the journey nor had they offered extensive information on Germany:

*"It was the smuggler who told us that things are difficult in Greece, unlike other countries like Germany" (Sum & Reza, female and male, 27 & 37 years old)*

In some cases migrants chose a destination based on an 'old' narrative. In other cases, they can rely on the smugglers, depending on the money they can offer and the routes the smuggler uses.

Destinations tend to be compartmentalized based on what kind of asylum they offer. This is as much a generalized as an individualized process, i.e. collectively Afghans may identify themselves as refugees, but each participant adjusted their expectation of what would be offered in the context of

being recognized as a refugee, based on what they pursuing or hoping to achieve. Thus, asylum became more than just protection from persecution or danger; it became an opportunity to acquire a specific social status. This, in turn, was associated with specific destinations, based on information received. Asylum, thus, evolves from a protection mechanism, to a life choice.

The link between asylum-destination-and social networks is perhaps one of the more crucial in relation to Afghan migration and has been documented in the past. Khosravi details this in his auto-ethnographical account

*“...information or rather rumors of the asylum policy in different countries was also a determining factor in the choice of country of destination.” (2007:329).*

This was confirmed by the informants in the study. Those who wanted to apply for asylum tended to veer towards countries with relevant information

*“...yeah I know they will send me to the camp and there they will give me language courses for 3 months and if I am accepted as a refugee they will let me go and if not they will deport me back” (Samir, male, 21 years old- in reference to Germany)*

*“Actually all our goal when we leave our country is to build a future. [...]. But for people who go to Germany they have to wait a year or two years to get the permission to work and then Sweden or countries like Austria they have the chance to get accepted sooner. That’s why I am planning on going to Sweden, to get accepted” (author’s emphasis, Rahman, male, 22 years old).*

Though the final point of the journey is Europe, the latter covers a very different geographical space than we know. Europe does not refer to Southern Europe, it is in fact always Scandinavia or Western Europe, starting from Austria and Germany and reaching as far as Norway. Greece, Spain and Malta do not form not part of this ‘asylum space’, a delineated area where the ‘right’ kind of asylum is offered.

The construction of the myth of Europe is gradual and everyone had a story to share. Overall, however, knowledge of asylum policies was vague at best, with rare exceptions where the informants were aware of both the possibility of rejection and the asylum process in place, in the destination countries. Asylum nonetheless, tends to be a key factor in choosing destinations and tends to shape the general discourse on Europe, as a safe, hospitable space, which offers protection and support-so long as one succeeds in crossing its borders, and the first obstacles; Bulgaria and Greece. Thus, destinations that offer an asylum package, with assistance, protection and possibility of long term settlement and integration, are far more attractive than countries like Greece, whose protection is temporary and uncertain.

## 4. Encountering the border: irregularity and risks of the journey

Discussion around border policies and border crossings is essentially a discussion about irregularity. It is interesting that the irregular manner of the journey does not seem to factor in the decision to migrate; or rather it does not appear to hinder or deter migration. Rather, it is treated as an unpleasant reality, a fact of modern mobility and across all interviews it was rarely discussed. 'Illegality', like the smuggler, seems to be an accepted but unwelcomed necessity. Thus, it is approached as 'a facet of "illegal aliens" very being' (Coutin 2005:7), having been a feature in many informants' lives, especially those who lived in the last decade in Iran and Pakistan. Thus, there is an awareness of what irregularity entails. The risk of deportation, the inability to claim wages owed, to send children to school, and to seek medical assistance, all feature in the narratives of the informants,

*"...well of course being illegal in a country its lots of problems. If you go to a doctor they cannot treat you too much without papers." (Hadjat, male, 27 years old)*

The irregularity itself, however, is a product of state policies and has significant implications for the journey itself and often is a reason for migration (e.g. being irregular in Iran). It has to be stressed, however, that irregularity in itself **did not deter informants from undertaking the journey**. In fact, the *illegal* element of migration is known from the beginning since, legal avenues are limited and the migrant has to choose in which irregular manner to undertake the journey depending on one's capital. Visa and pseudo-legitimate documents have higher cost for example. The standard method is to perform the ritual of the border crossings via land and sea, undocumented and in hiding. Border crossings, are after all, a matter of performance. They have "their own rituals – passport, applying for a visa, security checks and the performance of going through specific places and spaces of border control and customs" (Khosravi, 2011). Simultaneously the prohibition on arriving at their destinations shapes the unauthorized migrants' journeys, causing these migrants to hide even before they appear (Coutin, 2005); irregularity begins in that sense, from the moment one decides to migrate and informants were very much aware of this, since they had to arrange for their 'irregular' journey.

The hardships of the journey are heightened by the border controls and obstacles one has to overcome but also weather conditions, especially in the mountainous border crossing between Iran and Turkey. Knowledge of what to expect en route, of understanding the nature of the journey and knowing the border control policies and risks, is another.

The smugglers appear to be the main source of information regarding the journey, though not necessarily the most honest or accurate. Some were aware that the information will be false and that smugglers can and do lie

*".. well the decision [to migrate]is mine, I decide. But you have to listen to the smuggler because they know the way. They lie a lot, of course they lie and we know that but we don't also have another chance eh? This is it for us; we have to listen to the smuggler. You just have to follow them." (Tamim, male, 19 years old)*

However, not all interviewees were informed. In fact, almost half explained that they had no knowledge of what was to take place, which borders they would cross and/or how. It seems that

information about the route, the risks and obstacles along the way do not acquire 'substance' until encountered. Awareness of what is to follow is gradual, a step by step process that in a way safeguards them from worrying (and potentially changing their minds) about the journey. The immediate concern is the next step, not what follows it. This is also reflected in their decision making process regarding the migration project, especially when they discuss its evolution; it is gradual and dependent on the next step.

The first border crossing takes place from Afghanistan to Iran, usually via Pakistan. All but one of those who migrated from Afghanistan opted to perform that crossing irregularly, despite the possibility to travel with a visa. This may be largely in part to the history of the particular border, a fairly open one until the last decade.

The second border crossing, and the most dangerous according to all interviewees, is the Iranian-Turkish border

*"Iran-Turkey is the hardest because they deport to Afghanistan. We got caught once at the border in Iran and they deported us [...]hardest border. The Turkish-Greek border has water but it is easier. In Iran they can kill you."* (Sum & Reza female and male, 27 & 37 years old.)

A very particular migration industry has developed around the Iranian-Turkish border, focused on smuggling and primarily controlled by Kurdish groups.

*"The Kurds work both sides of the border"* (Murfat, male, 26 years old)

Almost all had the experience of the Iranian-Turkish border, which many recount as an impossible crossing. Information is acquired during the waiting phase, while in Iran and primarily in Turkey.

Of particular interest was the level of knowledge on Greek (and EU) border control policies informants had. This is particularly important considering the changes in the Greek migration management in recent years. In 2012, a fence was erected along 12.5 km in the Greek-Turkish land border by the Evros river; a common route of entry for migrants entering Greece. The fence was reinforced with Operation Shield that transferred 1,800 border guards along the land border, responsible mainly for border duties, apprehensions and screening. This shifted the majority of the flows to the maritime border. At the time of the study, the aforementioned measures were already in place. Yet, it is interesting that none of the informants referred to them. In fact, they claimed no knowledge of the exact policies at the border and the majority had no prior knowledge of the migration and asylum policies in place until they arrived either in Turkey or in the country

*"I knew nothing about Greece, the fence...nothing. [...]Nobody had said anything, we knew nothing"* (Sayad, male, 27 years old)

Rather, they appear to have had vague information about apprehensions, and mostly detention (mainly those in Turkey) again largely from smugglers and often inaccurate (most of the processes described were at least a year old<sup>12</sup>).

The death at the border was a recurrent theme in our discussions with informants, primarily those in Turkey but also with informants in Greece who were recent arrivals (less than a year).

*“ we all know it’s difficult and a risk. Because if you go to Greece the Greek police will shoot you when you are on the boat but if you try from here to Italy directly, on the way there is always the chance the boat may sink. Some friends of mine tried it, they were 4-5 days on the ship and they sank when they got closer to Italy”* (Nahil, male, 45 years old)

Border deaths are the clearest manifestation of border control policies. 2014 was the deadliest year in the Mediterranean Sea and one of the deadliest in the Aegean Sea. The IOM in its ‘Missing Migrants Project’ recorded from 2013 until 2014, 113 deaths and missing persons from recorded incidents of Search and Rescue (SAR) operations. UNHCR has criticized state policies which lead to ‘boat people’ being ‘interdicted, intercepted, turned around, ignored by passing ships, shot at, or denied landing’<sup>13</sup>.

Yet for all the harsh measures aiming to prevent entry, informants did not appear deterred by the ever present danger. The dangerous crossing is secondary to the desire that motivates them to pursue a better future. In that sense, Afghans exhibit remarkable agency and determination, motivated and sustained largely by the desire and hope for a better life, like many of the irregular arrivals that reach Greece.

This determination is embodied, at times, in repeated attempts to cross the border

*“They kept sending me back. Every time back to Turkey. Many of my friends died at sea, but I tried 6 times to cross until my money ran out but then a good friend of mine who works and has documents said he would give me 12000 dollars so I would not try to cross with the inflatable raft but with a proper ship . And that is how I got to Mytilini at night”* (Atal, male, 28 years old)

His successful passage, nonetheless, is not only a result of perseverance. It was largely determined by the capital he secured, courtesy of his friend that allowed him to cross with ‘a proper ship’. Absence of said capital could have resulted in a perpetual transit.

Three informants described their experience of being pushed back to Turkish waters and one informant- Rasat- who attempted to cross to Greece and Bulgaria three times, was pushed back or deported at the border every time. When asked if he still plans on attempting to cross he looked at us in surprise.

*“yes of course [...] still I am trying to gather some more money, a friend of mine said he will help me also and then I will go.”* (Rasat, male, 26 years old)

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<sup>12</sup> This is especially true in relation to detention, which will be discussed below.

<sup>13</sup> Erika Feller, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, speaking to the UNHCR’s Executive Committee, 6 October 2010 quoted in Grant 2011:141.

This is critical in relation to policies on the ground. Deterrence, in the form of border controls, fences and increased policing does not seem to deter inasmuch as to push for alternative entry points and increased loss of life. Determined to cross, and often with little alternative option, the overwhelming majority of migrants, including Afghans who seek entry to Europe traverse through Turkey; transforming the country into a critical path, but also hub where the migration project can-at times-change shape. Turkey is a critical step along the journey to Europe and for the Afghans the first destination where the possibility of settlement, emerges.

## 5. En Route to Europe: Turkey's role in the migration project

Irrespective of the final destinations, routes and means of transport tend to be the same and in fact, migrants, including the Afghans, tend to converge to certain cities and hubs (e.g. Tehran, Istanbul) and border crossings (e.g. Zabol, Zahedan, Van, for a detailed outlook of the routes see Annex II)

The largest proportion of irregular migrants enters Turkey through its eastern borders. They arrive by land (by trucks, bus or even on foot) via Urva, next to the Syrian border or via the cities of Van next to the Iranian frontier (see also Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012). From there migrants disperse depending on the money they have given, the smuggler chosen and travel to Ankara, Istanbul but also Antalya, Cannakale, Bodrum, and Izmir. There they wait, from a couple of days to months, until they succeed in embarking for a European country. For those who can afford to, there is an easy and direct route to Turkey via the airport. Turkey signed visa liberalization agreements with a significant number of countries (60 nationalities in total) in the Caucasus and the Middle East, for example Syria (2009), Libya (2009), Tajikistan (2009), thus enabling legal passage to Turkey that could be used as a transit step for entry to the EU. Afghanistan is one of those countries, where additionally the Turkish government sponsors an annual quota of students to attend Turkish Universities. Thus, it is possible for someone to arrive legally and cross to Greece 'illegally'. In fact, Turkey plays a critical role, in the Afghan case, both as a transit country for entry to the European Union but also as a place where migrants revisit their aspirations and migration project.

### 5.1 Afghans in Turkey

Afghans are a significant community in Turkey. During the fieldwork in Istanbul, we met with various NGO's and organizations<sup>14</sup> that were instrumental in understanding the size but also issues around the Afghan population in Turkey. According to the estimates provided, there were about 15,000 registered (pending processing), 4,000 refugees and 5,500 asylum seekers<sup>15</sup>. Thus, almost 25,000 refugees and asylum seekers that have been in one way or another registered primarily of Iraqi (40% of all claims), Afghani, Iranian and Somali origins.

Afghan arrivals increased suddenly in 2011-2012, with the numbers peaking to 14,000 new arrivals<sup>16</sup> (in comparison to an average of 2000 registrations annually). The sharp increase was attributed primarily to the change in Iran's policies. The social segregation that followed and fears of deportations pushed Afghans to secondary movement to Turkey that is the nearest border (interview with representative of NGO, Istanbul April 2014).

Turkey has placed geographical restrictions on the 1951 Convention on Refugees. Only European citizens could apply for asylum. All other nationalities, until recently, would have to register with

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<sup>14</sup> Upon request they will remain anonymous, but a total of three NGOs involved with the migrants were approached and one church organisation willingly discussed with us the issue of immigrants. I am grateful for their willingness to engage with us and offer information.

<sup>15</sup> The numbers have been rounded up and refer to the latest data of November 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Arrivals are counted based on registrations. Thus, the numbers are official but refer only to register or pre-registered Afghans. Those who have not sought UNHCR or NGO assistance are entirely undocumented and thus, unaccounted for.

UNHCR and if their claim was accepted they could remain in Turkey waiting resettlement. In practice this could take from months to years, depending on the nationality. In May 2013 UNHCR announced the Afghan 'suspension program', whereby the Afghans would be eligible only for pre-registration, i.e. their data would be recorded but not their claim. The system allows them a level of protection from detention and deportation but effectively cuts them off the resettlement process, the only available option until then for them in Turkey.

For the NGOs contacted in the research, this is a critical factor in the reduction of the Afghan population that now seek to transit to Europe more than before. The programme change was in response to the rapid increase of the Afghan population, who nonetheless had scarce resettlement prospects. Only 0.8% of the total refugees admitted to the US in 2011 were from Afghanistan (Fine, 2014). Furthermore, when they are resettled they tend to be chosen from the pool of applicants located already in Iran or in Afghanistan.

The new law on *Foreigners and International Protection* that came into force in April 2014, aspires to completely overhaul and reform Turkey's asylum system, which in turn will offer greater protection to the Afghans including access to health care (even during pre- registration). In a way, according to NGO's on the ground this is a test for integration. Unlike other nationalities, the Afghans tend to integrate fairly well in large urban centers like Istanbul. If the law expands to offer residence and work permit, with access to healthcare, it will offer a durable solution to the Afghans, who would likely prefer to remain in Turkey.

In fact, some informants explained that they would have stayed in Turkey if they were given the opportunity to work and reside legally, with a residency or work permit. Thus, irregularity impacted their decision to transit. Transitory movement from Turkey appears to be fairly common, with Greece being the predominant destination although a new route, one from Bulgaria on to Serbia and Hungary emerged in 2013. The NGOs visited in Istanbul explained that migrants often sought information on routes and they tried to inform them of the dangers of the irregular journey. However, they also confirmed that Greece was from the beginning perceived as a transit point, a gate to enter Europe.

Aside from transit and forward migration, Düvell also points out that "according to *ad hoc* observations, irregular migrants and refugees are also returning to Istanbul in small numbers; this is due to the deterioration of the situation in Greece in combination with the blocking of onward routes (Düvell 2013). However, in the present sample only one case had returned voluntarily to Turkey as a result of the situation in Greece and primarily because he was unemployed. Aware he could work in Istanbul, he opted to return to Turkey.

## 5.2 In Waiting

The stay in Turkey is a time of waiting, a time spent *in transit* and waiting *for transit* to be realized. Waiting, according to Hage (2009) indicates that we are engaged in, and have expectations from, life. It, in fact, serves multiple purposes. For some, the waiting has practical purpose; to collect the required amount of money for the next stage of the journey. For others the waiting serves a different purpose; collection of information, acquisition of knowledge and in some cases- reconsideration of the migration project. For all, the waiting stage is also the intermediary position between desiring to

transit, and having the capability to do so. The waiting stage enables some to shift from the desire to the possibility, others to reconsider and many more to remain in waiting, in transit, until the moment where desire and capability meet.

All of the informants worked in Turkey. In fact, the employment opportunities is what differentiates drastically the experience of waiting in Istanbul in comparison to Athens, since

*“the difference is here you don’t have to search for food in the garbage. Here you can find a job, save some money.”* (Ali, male, 40 years old)

The fieldwork in Turkey confirmed that the majority of Afghans find employment and tend to work in the textile industry (bleaching the jeans or cutting the textiles). The abundance of underground places (sweatshops) that then sale the products to large companies, mean that one can find work uninsured. The cost is also extremely low for employers, since they pay 350 lira on average (whereas minimum wage for Turkish citizens is 900 lira<sup>17</sup>). All the informants encountered in Istanbul worked in the textile industry, and some of those interviewed in Greece had also stated previous employment in either textiles or construction while living in Turkey.

*“I am planning on going further to Europe that’s why I came here but the problem is the money, I don’t have that much so I am still here”* (Gulma, male, 30 years old)

There is an understanding that the money collected will be used for the journey to Greece, Bulgaria and/or Italy. Nevertheless, no one of the informants in Istanbul had managed to save the required sum, and in most cases several thousand dollars separated them from their goal. Thus, a certain sense emerges that the discussion around the journey takes place outside the framework of time, since the latter is an unknown element. They do not know when they will collect the expected sum or when the smuggler will allow them to go. Again the smuggler appears in the narrative, in the case of Turkey mostly as the one who waits along with migrants, only his waiting is different; he waits to receive the payment.

Istanbul especially, is an information hub. The fact that migrants find themselves in similar conditions, with similar needs creates a space for exchange which is reinforced during the waiting phase. Narratives of success stories tend to be reproduced during the transit phase and within these stories a certain imaginary is constructed of what can be expected. Information refers to different aspects of the journey, yet what is mostly discussed while in Turkey is the route and what follows the border crossing.

The **route for transit** is a critical issue and during the visit in Istanbul it became a heatedly debated subject. The informants wanted to know whether rumors were true about policies in Greece of detention and deportation, and which was the safest way to go; Greece or Bulgaria? The routes are assessed based on information acquired from smugglers

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<sup>17</sup> TRY350=EUR126, TRY900=EUR323

*“Bulgaria? Yes the way is closed. Yes, smugglers told us it’s closed.*

*If you live here for a year you meet a lot of smugglers so you can always chose also based on the money how to go. They don’t really care as long as they get their money and they offer you a lot of different routes with different costs. So I wanted Italy because I think it’s less risky.”* (Samir, male, 21 years old)

Routes are also chosen based on social networks, and specifically those who have already performed the passage. Successful arrival is, in reality, a recommendation to future migrants to undertake similar passage. In very few cases, the informants appeared ambivalent about what they wanted to achieve. The desire to realize their aspiration clashed with the limited capability to do so and return was in some cases discussed as an alternative

*“Actually yeah I have a plan. End of this year I have to be in Europe. If I don’t make it I will go back to Afghanistan [...] I don’t want to stay in Turkey either I go to Europe or I go back*  
“(Tamim, male, 19 years old)

Yet, as the interpreter cautioned after the interviews, return is often discussed in abstraction, with neither concrete plans nor concrete desire to pursue it. It is a defense mechanism for those who stay behind.

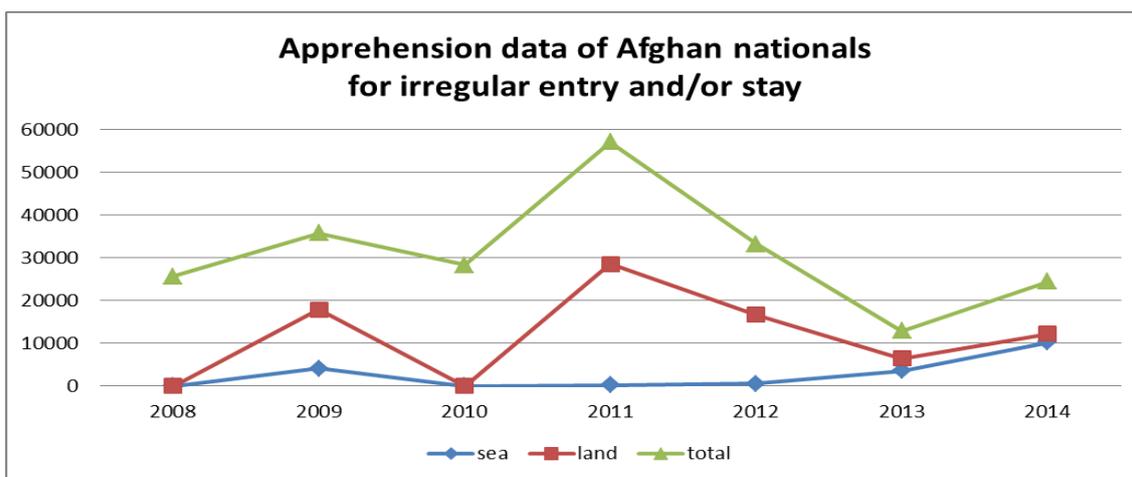
## 6. Arrival to Greece: transit in the EU

For those who succeed in transiting, the experience of Greece, is perhaps the most crucial aspect of the journey since it is in Greece where Afghans encounter the harsh reality of European migration management and where return re-enters the discourse.

### 6.1 Afghan migration to Greece in context

The exact number of Afghans in Greece is unknown. In 2012 the Embassy of Afghanistan in Bulgaria noted that legal migrants (primarily pink card holders) were estimated at approximately 2,900. The President of the Community of Afghans in Greece estimated the population to about 10,000 of which regular were believed to be approximately 1,500 (the figure includes pink card, recognized refugees, humanitarian or subsidiary protection). Communication in early January 2014 with the President of the Greek Forum for Refugees noted that the figures had more or less remained the same.

It should be noted however, that the numbers of overall apprehensions have dropped significantly in comparison to the past.



Source: Data provided by Hellenic Police. For 2014 data refer to 11months. For 2008 and 2010 only totals are available.

From those who had managed to cross to Greece, 29 entered via the maritime border within the last three years (since 2011), confirming what the apprehension data show-the shift from the land to the sea border. Only ten (10) had entered via the land border, the majority prior to 2012, i.e. before the erection of the fence in the border region of Evros. The efficiency of the fence in curbing the flow from the land border is clear, as seen in the apprehension figures that register a remarkable decrease from the land border. However, the overall result remains dubious, considering the overwhelming majority of arrivals now enters via the maritime border, at a higher risk.

The ebbs and rise of the flows between land and sea border are attributable to various factors. We need to take also into consideration the suspension of returns (in 2010) to Greece in the framework of

Dublin II. The temporary pause in the returns (which is still in place today) meant that if arrested in another country the immigrant was unlikely to be returned to Greece.

According to the President of the Afghan Community in Greece, the suspension of returns likely facilitates the passage of Afghans to other countries:

*“The main route is still Greece, only now because it is the one country where returns under Dublin II have stopped. Arrivals can be fingerprinted but if caught at another member state do not face the danger of return”*

The knowledge that Dublin II returns have ceased has circulated among Afghan networks and to a large extent the spike of 2011 onwards can be attributed to it. The recent recommendation by UNHCR to EU MS to continue the suspension of returns to Greece, will likely also feed into the networks in the near future<sup>18</sup>.

## 6.2 Experiencing Greece

Informants were usually given scarce information on what would happen once they crossed and again their main source of information was the smugglers who often advised on what to do once across. Some were told they would be briefly detained and then released with a document that would enable them to travel to Athens. This type of (mis)information was very common. Thus, almost no one knew the actual purpose of the document, an administrative expulsion order requiring the holder to voluntarily leave the country in 30 days.

*“I arrived in Mytilini with two friends; we went together to the police. They kept us for 7 seven days and then they gave us a 1-month paper. We went to Athens and heard from other Afghans that the paper they gave us was useless; you cannot do anything with it. So when the month finished I asked my father and mother to send me 3000 euros to go to Italy because here [in Greece] it is not good and I want to go somewhere else. But they had no money to send me. So I stayed to collect the money, but I have not managed to yet”* (Helmat, male, 21 years old)

It is interesting to note that in theory the system has changed. Based on the new system, screening takes place at reception centers, and depending on one’s nationality and status the individual is transferred to a detention/pre-removal facility or release. In practice, many of the informants who were apprehended/rescued upon entry, stayed for a couple of days to a week in the screening center and then released with an administrative expulsion order.

Others, rely on the kindness of strangers upon entry

*“we came with a ship, really small, 30 people. Nighttime, we made it to a jungle area and put us on a boat. We reached Greece and in the morning we reached an area with houses, we were so hungry and a woman gave us some cheese and bread and she said she would call*

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=54cb3af34>

*the police. We thanked her because she helped us and we didn't know where to go so we wanted the police to come. And the police came and took us to another area, I don't know what's called and after that we stayed there for 1 week.*" (Arat, male, 26 years old)

Arat's story is one of the few examples of successful transit in the present research but also of dual border experience, since he later on successfully crossed to Italy.

### 6.3 In transit

Greece is not a destination for the Afghans. In fact, it has not been for quite some time. As already discussed in the first section, their choice of destination is largely determined by the information and 'myths' perpetuated within networks, mainly the pursuit of a specific kind of asylum (that incorporates integration and assistance). If the social networks, aspirations and smugglers significantly impact the journey until arrival to Greece, policies on the ground determine its outcome. Thus, the interplay between structure, agency but also capability continues during transit.

The idea of Greece as a transit space can be found in the informant discourse:

*"In Afghanistan I had heard there was a country called Greece and it is like a door, you go through it to get to Europe"* (Dabar, male, 25 years old)

Few exceptions in the present research discussed the country as a final destination<sup>19</sup>. They remained, however, due to a variety of factors; employment, settlement and integration (especially those outside Athens), limited or no funding, fear of being arrested and returned or already in detention, though for the majority, transit was and remained during the interviews the initial aim and hope for the future.

It is in this stage where the aspiration/capability and structure/agency meet, with the 'structural' obstacles affecting the capability and the aspiration shaping the agency of the migrant. The *in transit* status is constructed and perceived subjectively and objectively. The main objective element, are the structural obstacles that regulate the journey, in the shape of border control policies (De Genova 2002), in the employment opportunities, the cost of the beginning of the migratory journey as well as seeing it through to the end, and the existence and/or development of social capital (see van Hear 2004). The absence of sufficient funding is the primary reason Afghans end up in transit.

Afghan migrants in Greece can be in transit mentally, and waiting, for the realization of their desire to leave. Like the journey before, transit is a balancing act between wishing to be mobile and succeeding, whereby the success depends on overcoming structural obstacles (and ability to do so) and agency in having the desire to leave. One can be in transit for many years, holding out hope that the necessary money will be collected or the appropriate opportunity will arise or security checks will be bypassed. Yet, one may very well succeed in transiting to another destination after residing a couple of months, or even years in a country. Thus, transitory movement is simultaneously within and beyond the control of the state.

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<sup>19</sup> Of the 41 informants interviewed in Greece only 5 stated their intent to stay.

Arrival is an ambiguous concept because as Agustin (2003) points out, many migrants never settle, never mentally or physically relinquish a house, village city or –I would add- the idea of what they expect and desire to find in their destination. In that sense, they remain in transit-mentally aspiring to be mobile and physically constrained by obstacles. The Greek context reinforces this state of ‘in between’ for the Afghans, largely due to the asylum system.

Asylum in Greece was until early 2013 a highly bureaucratic and centralized process. For a certain period (2008-2012) applications could only be lodged at the headquarters of the Alien Police Division in Athens (Petrou Ralli). ‘Selection’ was arbitrary, and due to short-staffing originally only 300 applications could be lodged per week; that number eventually trickled down to 20-30 by 2011 (UNHCR, 2011). Human Rights Watch as early as 2008, described the process as a “cattle call” (2008: 90), disrespecting asylum seekers and deterring many to apply for asylum. The delays in second instance decisions (appeal process) could take as long as six years, with some cases stretching a decade. This was one of the paradoxes of the system; it appealed to those who wanted to remain in Greece and had no other venue for legalizing their stay while discouraging those who wanted to apply for protection because they feared their claim would take a long time to be processed. This ‘abuse’ of the asylum system, is evident to this day, with over 45,000 second degree applications pending for examination. The overburdening of the asylum process was one of the many reasons why asylum in Greece was unattractive for the Afghans, along with absence of social benefits, employment support for integration and long-term prospects of regularization.

*“I knew you don’t offer asylum, I had heard from other Afghans there is no asylum here, and the other guy is here for ten years and has nothing, only a pink card to show for! The Greeks are starving how am I going to survive?” (Samjur, male, 21 years old)*

The desire to leave is reinforced also through the information disseminated that asylum is hard to acquire. This links to how asylum is understood, not as a temporary or subsidiary protection but the refugee status, which even under the new system is conservatively offered to specific individual cases. In addition to this, the new asylum system has to overcome the previous years of mismanagement but additionally Greek ‘internalisation’ of border controls; namely the Xenios Zeus Operation. A ‘show your paper’ policy, known as ‘sweep’, it consisted of police patrols in urban centers targeting potential migrants. Though the operation was largely ineffective (see Angeli, Triandafyllidou, 2014), in terms of operational goals, it succeeded in impacting Afghan mobility

*“Before, it was ok to be without papers but now if you don’t have documents they send you back. They arrested and sent to Athens three months ago 45 people-Albanians, Afghans and Pakistanis-everyone was returned. They are back in Afghanistan!” (Alaskar, male, 23 years old)*

The possibility of apprehension-detention and return causes immobility, deterring movement in fear of being caught. While it creates fear, it also allows for strategies of survival to emerge. For example, a common assumption was that those who were arrested upon entry and fingerprinted on paper, would not be returned under Dublin II because the system did not record their data

*“No you see my fingerprints are only on paper. They don’t have them anywhere. But in Katehaki they take them with laser [biometrics]. Paper you don’t see. Laser you do.” (Sayd, male, 27 years old)*

Sayd differentiates between the fingerprints on paper and the biometric data. The first is harmless since it is not recorded on screen. The biometrics however, is traceable. Aware that if his claim is recorded by the new asylum service and denied, he will not be able to travel to another EU member state, he prefers irregularity.

Strategies emerge in response to the cost of transit-often as high as 4000 dollars for Italy -and the risks encountered during border crossings. A trend has emerged in the last two years, whereby families collect the required sum and send the woman to the final destination to apply for asylum. Depending on how much they can collect, the wife is accompanied with the child/children or travels alone while the husband remains in Greece. Upon arrival to countries like Sweden, they apply for asylum; if received they use it to petition for family reunification with their husbands. Thus, the family unit adjusts its capability to migrate in the framework that guides their mobility; one person will transit, in the hopes of success.

Living irregularly in Greece at the time of Xenios Zeus can often be an insurmountable obstacle for migrants and a particularly difficult experience for those with families since detention means also separation of the family members. Yet, informants discussed how the police rarely stopped those who were accompanied by children, which resulted in a conscious decision for families to always move together while in urban centers. Finally, marriage as a way of legalizing one's stay in the country was discussed. One informant had been inspired by friends who had succeeded in marrying and acquiring documents (both the marriage and certificate were fake, at a cost of 10,000 dollars).

The key structural components, however, affecting successful transit, is detention. The fear or the experience of detention appeared in every discussion that took place with informants, whether in Greece or Turkey. The conditions, process and unfairness (as it is experienced) of detention have circulated amongst Afghan networks and colored both the journey and the routes (see section above on Turkey) but also return. The final section of the analysis, will discuss detention in Greece and particularly in relation to return.

## **6.4 Detention and Return**

Thirteen (13) informants in the sample were in detention at the time of the research. Of those, nine (9) were registered as 'voluntary' returnees with the IOM program. Return and detention seem contradictory notions but in fact, the two policies have been intrinsically linked in an effort to manage irregular migratory flows.

Return is a complex notion, especially when discussed in the context of Afghan migration. Firstly, as previously discussed, the difficulty of distinguishing migrants from refugees and the difficulty of clearly distinguishing in which group Afghans belong to, impacts the return process. If neither refugees nor migrants, what instruments can apply to them, protect them and can be deployed for their return? Secondly, return is not a new subject for Afghan migrants. Instead, it is embedded in their broader mobility pattern. Thirdly, there is not a singular type of return. There are three types of return programs based on IOM's involvement and/or national authorities:

1. Voluntary without compulsion, when migrants decide at any time during their sojourn to return home at their own volition and cost';

2. 'voluntary under compulsion, when persons are at the end of their temporary protected status, rejected for asylum, or are unable to stay, and choose to return at their own volition'; and
3. 'Involuntary', as a result of the authorities of the host State ordering deportation (IOM 2012, in Koch 2014:911).

The first two options fall under the umbrella of AVRR-Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration, with reintegration feasible for selected individuals meeting specific requirements. They apply to third country nationals who do not fulfill the conditions for entry and stay in the country, third country nationals whose asylum application is still pending or has been rejected and third country nationals, who enjoy international protection, but nonetheless wish to return to their countries. In Greece, return-including voluntary return- is not solely managed by IOM. Instead, the Hellenic Police undertakes the deportations but since 2009 is increasingly active also in voluntary returns in cooperation with IOM or through charter flights.

For example from 2009 until 2013 a total of 1,578 persons were returned via the voluntary return program of the Hellenic police<sup>20</sup>. During the same period the Hellenic Police registered 3,603 returns of Afghans that were undertaken by both the Police and the IOM and include both voluntary and forced returns<sup>21</sup>. Thus, in total, 5,181 Afghans have been returned from 2009 to 2013. The figure, when compared to the return numbers of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, is extremely low and with the exception of 2012 (where a noticeable peak in returns took place) all other years fall below 800 returns annually.

The motivations behind return, like the programs that administer it, vary. The new 'homelands' are often temporary, and unwelcoming. Afghans, who do not succeed in securing a legal status, reside in limbo and undocumented. In those cases, return may very well be a viable option. Amongst the Afghans there is also the myth of the homeland, the pre-war Afghanistan and "the dream to return can be a longing for a return to an Afghanistan of idealized memories" (Braakman and Schlenkhoff, 2007:10). Then there are those whose applications have been rejected or are pending for lengths of time and those who are forcefully removed from the State. There is also another option, a grey area; Voluntary return from detention, where the boundaries are blurring between wanting to return and returning to escape the punitive hand of the State.

During a visit to IOM's offices<sup>22</sup> in Athens, we encountered a steady stream of incoming migrants of various nationalities, Pakistanis, Georgians, Bangladeshis. The absence of Afghans was a sharp contradiction but as a member of staff explained, overall the participation of Afghans in AVR is limited. Overall, we managed to conduct only two interviews with Afghans who were considering to approach or had approached the IOM to return to Afghanistan.

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<sup>20</sup> Data provided upon request by the Directorate of Aliens Division, 23 July 2014.

<sup>21</sup> These are separate return programs, and the total number does not include those returned voluntarily by the Hellenic Police.

<sup>22</sup> The IOM office in Athens kindly gave us permission to approach potential returnees and ask them to participate in the research. The process was voluntary and without involvement of IOM's staff.

The first was with Zahid, who came from Afghanistan at the age of 21. His friend, who lived in Greece for a decade, had told him he could find a job, and documents (the pink card). We met him outside IOM's offices on his last visit before returning to Afghanistan. He chose to return because he missed his family and wanted to see his children again yet he explained he had been happy in Greece. He is the best example of voluntary return. He exercises his agency by choosing to return home, neither under pressure nor as a result of external constraints.

Murfat was a potential voluntary returnee. He had a long distant relation living in Athens who refused to meet him unless he legalized his stay in the country (usually via the asylum process). However, Murfat had heard that the Afghans who applied for asylum were sent to detention and returned to Afghanistan. Having no funds to transit and unable to get a job, he was considering when we met him, to return home. His reason for return, is fear of police apprehension and detention and lack of job opportunities.

With these two exceptions, all other returnees we encountered were held at the detention facility of Amygdaleza. The systematic use of detention has been increasingly regarded as the most effective tool to secure the return of the arrested migrant to his/her home country. In fact, until late 2014, detention had become Greece's flagship policy in the management of irregular migration.

Return<sup>23</sup>, and especially voluntary return, is portrayed as the benevolent option—at least in the EU framework—for those already deemed to be unwanted in the territory of the State. The European Union Directive 2008/115/EC (Return Directive)<sup>24</sup> lays down a fairly restrictive framework when it comes to the use of detention for irregular migrants and asylum seekers. Yet, for all the exhaustive list restricting grounds for detention, it allows asylum seekers to be held in order to determine their nationality or identity and/or to decide the applicant's right to enter the territory and in cases there is a risk of absconding. All options are open to interpretation and systematic application, since in reality most asylum seekers arrive undocumented and are thereby "eligible" to be detained until their identity is verified. The Directive furthermore places a limit on the length of detention, which cannot exceed 18 months.

From the visits in Amygdaleza<sup>25</sup>, a picture emerged of voluntary return as a way of escaping the punitive hand of the state, a 'way out' of incarceration, but not necessarily a good choice. Undocumented migrants who hadn't yet applied for asylum prior to their apprehension are arrested and transferred to Amygdaleza, from the various detention facilities where they are initially held, once their screening is completed. The initial basis for the transfer is nationality. If a third country national is apprehended and considered eligible for return (i.e., does not fall in the non-deportable category of nationalities, like Syrians, Somalis, or Iraqis), s/he will usually be transferred from a detention facility (where s/he's initially held) to a pre-removal center either to be deported or voluntarily returned.

Interviewees reported high levels of confusion<sup>26</sup> and a lack of information, along with the fear of time spent essentially in limbo. In a climate of uncertainty, voluntary return is presented as the salient

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<sup>23</sup> <http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewHTML.asp?FileID=12461&Language=en>

<sup>24</sup> Directive 2008/115/EC of 16 December 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Parts of this section have been published until the title "Involuntary mobility: between a rock and a hard place" at <http://bordercriminologies.law.ox.ac.uk/involuntary-mobility/>

<sup>26</sup> See also Medecins sans frontieres (MSF), *Invisible Suffering. Prolonged and systematic detention of migrants and asylum seekers in substandard conditions in Greece*, April 2014, <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/node/55166>

option, when in fact if one considers the choice carefully, it's not so much an option as a pre-determined end result. One way or another, the migrant will be returned. It's the 'how' that is up for discussion.

*"look at me in here, I am not a criminal and look where they keep me? Ok I am illegal, I have no papers but I am not a criminal. Ahead is better. Ok I am illegal but here everything is closed. They open the doors twice a day. It is not like this there[Europe]...there you can at least walk outside"* (Muham, male, 18 years old)

Muham recognizes his 'illegal' status as it is defined by the State but not his 'criminal' status, since he did not commit a crime. He contrasts what happens in Greek detention with what he knows (or thinks he knows) of other countries-'*ahead is better*'. In fact, what lies beyond Greece towards other EU member states, is a common theme in the discussions with detainees.

Upon arrival at the facility, migrants are, at least in theory, meant to be informed of the duration of their detention, the option to apply for asylum and what happens in relation to their detention of the information disseminated. Yet, information are vague

*"they tell me you will be released tomorrow, the day after...five months have gone by like this"* (Rah, male, 19 years old)

In fact, the accuracy and level of information depend on who offers it (e.g., the guard, the asylum officer, the interpreter) and if it's indeed offered. Sources are jumbled and so are facts, especially in relation to asylum. When speaking with Afghans who had registered for the voluntary return program, they stressed the fact that they'd been told by various sources (detainees, friends, guards) that if they applied for asylum their detention time would start from zero and they'd end up spending at least 18 months in the facility. This dissuaded them from seeking protection, which has various implications not only in relation to asylum, but also for return. That is, if they aren't categorized as asylum seekers, they're treated as eligible returnees, inadvertently pushing them closer towards the option of voluntary return.

*"I asked to be deported [...] three month there.. they said I could apply for asylum but I knew I would be rejected! That takes more than a year. In that time I will go back and register with the army, make some money and come back .*

Q: *Come back where?*

M: *I will go through Bulgaria or Ukraine<sup>27</sup> or here if I have to[...] France is still my final destination"* (Jul, male, 26 years old)

This type of return also raises the issue of sustainability. How many of those returnees will remain in Afghanistan? Some of the informants were already predisposed to re-migration.

*"[...] I am only going back to see my brother, make sure he is ok and of course I will leave again but I will take him with me this time. We cannot stay there. We will try for Canada or Germany but probably Canada"* (Jad, male, 25 years old)

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<sup>27</sup> The reference to Ukraine is interesting because it is one of the old transit routes for Afghans to Europe.

For those who utilized return to accomplish something specific, like the informant who wanted to see his brother, return is treated as temporary and functional-it serves a specific purpose. For those who return because they are not allowed or cannot wait the system out, remaining in Afghanistan will likely depend on the broader socio-economic and political context.

In fact, a snowball effect takes place, where detention -unclear in length and outcome- is affecting both asylum seekers and irregular migrants, with the former in some cases opting out of the asylum claim while their application is being processed and the latter never applying. Instead of moving forward to their original destinations, which for the overwhelming majority is an EU member state like Sweden, Germany, and Austria, movement is now backwards, to the country of origin. Afghans discuss the prospect of return as involuntary; a sharp contrast to their original migratory movement. They choose it but it's not a real choice. Perhaps even more critically, they choose it because they understand that it's a quick way out, imagining that once they sign up for the return, this will happen within a short time. Yet, in our last visit to Amygdaleza, we encountered Afghans who were waiting for more than three months to return and who were puzzled as to why they were not sent back home, especially since they were not allowed to stay in Greece. Aware they are 'unwanted,' their continuous detention, despite having accepting to return, is seen simply as further punishment. Almost all of the informants asked us to intervene with IOM to hasten their return. The conditions of detention, but primarily detention itself-the loss of freedom and the involuntary immobility they were pushed to, meant that for most return was the best option.

## 7. Conclusions: the actors, policies and factors that shape Afghan migration

Afghan migration to Greece is a good example in our efforts to understand the complexities of human mobility and our attempts to categorize and respond appropriately. Though not unique, in terms of how their migration is instigated or exercised, they are a representative example of mixed migratory flows and how they formulate their migration. Not all refugees or economic migrants, the inadequacy of the refugee category in relation to Afghan mobility has been noted before (Scalettaris, 2009), as have the multidirectional and cyclical migration patterns, transnational social and economic networks that have developed, and are embedded in the Afghan livelihood strategy (Monsutti, 2005).

Afghan migration is not attributed to a singular reason but to a complex web of socio-economic, political and personal factors that impact differently each individual. This was confirmed during the discussions with informants where motivations varied and were prioritized. The need for security (either from family/personal vendettas or conflict) was always put forth as primary factor and education and employment as secondary factors. In fact, all three aspects often come together under one status; that of the refugee. **Asylum** and specifically long-lasting protection, which is the refugee status, encompass for the Afghans not only protection from return/deportation, but access to socio-economic security and welfare, education and training. Asylum, thus, is holistic protection and the first step towards a new life. This does not negate their need for safety, but it does mean that they exercise a high degree of agency in pursuit of said objective. Their transit from Greece is discussed in lieu of this, as a necessity in the face of the State's inability (or unwillingness) to offer what other EU MS do; an all-inclusive protection.

If asylum is the central point, **capital**, as with all migratory projects remains the main determinant of the capability to be mobile. Without it, Afghans remain in the country of origin and/or in the transit country for indeterminable periods of time. Economic and social capital is critical in the mobility phase, and mainly generated through the family (immediate and extended), however the leading actor is the **smuggler**. Smuggling is treated as a business transaction and a necessity. The smuggler guides the journey, assists them in overcoming border controls and at times is even described as a source of information regarding arrival to Greece. Family and friends offer general information on destination countries and personal stories of success but informants rarely presented accurate and concrete information regarding their destination. Though most of the informants had received limited or inaccurate facts, they stressed the need of the smuggler to undertake the crossing.

In this context, it is interesting to note that the 'illegality' attributed to the journey and the criminalization (Aas, 2011) that migrants undergo from the moment of departure without authorization, is known but bypassed. Thus, policies that produce irregularity-mainly border controls and securitisation of migration are approached with caution but do not deter the journey. Aware of the risks and loss of life, they may take longer time preparing or gathering information in hubs like Istanbul, or money to cross with a different method or route. Yet, the policies do not seem to deter, only to redirect or extend one's transit stage. This is also the case of the policy of detention.

Detention is approached as both inhumane (because of its length) and unfair (because absence of documents is perceived as illegality but not a crime per se) but also as a critical waste of time in the migrant's life. During the time in detention the individual is unable to work and send remittances, access family and friends, move onwards to a final destination. In that sense, the investment in the journey is lost.

Those who were in Greece but had avoided detection, sought ways and means to continue evading police sweeps in urban and rural centers. Where detention proved effective, was in relation to asylum. It has deterred both migrants in detention but also outside the facilities from accessing the asylum process, the former of fear of extending their stay in the facilities and the latter of fear of being apprehended and transferred to detention. Thus, without deterring entry, detention has impacted routes, pushed migrants 'in hiding', limited access to the asylum process and imposed imprisonment on a population that committed an 'administrative' but not criminal offence. A punitive solution was applied to a policy issue, while raising simultaneously the question of sustainability. What will happen to those who return from detention, in order to avoid the very conditions of imprisonment? Will they remain in their country of return, or depart once more for Europe?

Voluntary returns are undoubtedly a humane and necessary migration management tool, designed to assist those who wish to return. However, the process acquires a different meaning when taking place in detention. It becomes more of an exercise of power over migrants, a way of reestablishing state control over detainees and pushing them towards involuntary mobility. There is still an exercise of agency, on behalf of the detainees, as in almost all aspects of migration and return, yet the agency is shaped less by positive desires and aspirations and more by structural constraints and negative experiences.

Nonetheless, return for the Afghans in Greece does not appear to be a product of seeking the return to the homeland, in as much as escaping the 'criminalization' imposed by the State upon asylum seekers and migrants alike. In the end, detention aims to pave the ground for expedient and 'voluntary' return, which is deemed to be 'less costly and politically less painful than enforced removal' (van Houte, 2014:99) to governments. Its success remains to be seen, requiring research on the sustainability of return programs out of detention.

At the time of writing these conclusions national elections took place in Greece. The new government's priority has been the exact application of the European legal framework and specifically the Return Directive, which prescribes detention only in exceptional circumstances. As a result, by February 2015 pre-removal centers like Amygdaleza, where a significant number of Afghans were detained, opened their doors and allowed for the release of detainees who were exceeding the 18 month maximum or who were vulnerable groups and/or who had applied for asylum and had no prior criminal conviction. The images of migrants being released and transferred by buses to Omonoia square with papers for administrative departure, dominated the media for days. It remains to be seen whether the new policy will impact in any way migratory routes and flows, though learning from past lessons the likelihood is that it will not change migratory plans. It may affect the duration of stay and/or transit from Greece, but the country will likely remain a key entry and exit site at the Europe Union's external borders.

Outside clear classifications and categorizations, Afghan mobility showcases the changing landscape of migration and mobility, with forced and irregular migration interchanging and often applying simultaneously to groups and individuals. In parallel, it raises questions of policy effectiveness. The continues distinction between migrant and refugee, and the attempt to implement the equivalent policies, at least in the case of the Afghans, falls short of the reality; a population that has been for decades on the move, and for whom migration continues to be a livelihood strategy but also a quest for new homelands and hospitable spaces.

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## 9. Annex I- Organisations interviewed for the research

Interview Number	Organisation/Institution	Method of communication	Date
1.	Embassy of Afghanistan in Bulgaria	Written communication	11 & 12 /02/2013
2.	NGO in Afghanistan	Skype interview	13/03/2013
3.	Community of migrants and refugees in Greece	Interview	15/01/2014
4.	Hellenic Police, Aliens Directorate	Interview, Statistical data and information	05/04/2013 Throughout 2012-2014
5.	Religious organization (Istanbul)	Interview	26/03/2014
6.	NGO (Istanbul)	Interview	23/03/2014
7.	NGO (Istanbul)	Interview	21/03/2014
8.	Religious Organization (Istanbul)	Interview	20/03/2014

## 10. Annex II- Map of the migratory routes

