**The Migration Conference 2019 (Bari, Italy)**

**Special Session: “Migration Governance and Asylum Crisis – The MAGYC project”**

**Abstract**

*Navigating between hospitality and hostility. How did EU migration hotspots develop into spaces of migration governance crisis? An analysis of asylum seekers’ experiences in Lesbos Island, Greece*

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This paper presents the research objectives and conceptual framework of a PhD thesis being conducted within the context of the MAGYC project. This will be done in accordance with its general objective to appraise policy responses in light of the “migration crisis” and to assess their efficiency for the long-term governance of migration in the European Union (EU).

In particular, the PhD study in question tests the relevance of concepts which are often pertinent in migration studies and human geography – such as “fragmented journeys” (Hammer *et al.*, 1997), “borderscapes”(Bocchi *et al*. 2005), “non-spaces” (Augé 1992), “immobility” (Conlon 2011) and “liminal spaces” (Papadopoulos *et al.* 2008) – and the extent to which they may be applied to the current context in the “hotspots”, which we define as spaces of reception, identification, and processing of arrivals established in 2015 by the EU to manage migratory pressure at its external borders. The author suggests that migration hotspots, and specifically the one established in the Greek island of Lesbos, became both a factor and a symbol of the asylum governance crisis at EU and national levels. In order to do so, the study unveils the different expressions of this multifaceted and spatial-temporal crisis based on the personal and collective perceptions and experiences of a range of stakeholders, at the crux of which lie asylum seekers – whom are theoretically “transiting” through Lesbos but who, we will argue, are forced into immobility, or ‘trapped in transit’ as a result of the hotspot policy. This qualitative analysis will be complemented by an assessment of how local populations, humanitarian actors and political authorities at both the national and European level – among other stakeholders – have perceived, reacted to and dealt with the “crisis” through their migrant reception policies and practices, alternating between hospitality and hostility.

The paper shall focus on laying down the conceptual framework of this PhD thesis and will include a stakeholder mapping exercise, in order to serve as a basis for subsequent field work and primary data collection in the Greek hotspot of Lesbos (through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and field observations).

**References:**Migration Crisis, Asylum, Reception Policies, Hotspots, European Union, Greece

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