

Transient Liquidities
along the New Silk Road II
GRADUATION STUDIO



2022 – 2023

COLLECTIVE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Turkey is undoubtedly one of the main settings in the Eurasian migration as a country of emigration, immigration, and transit. Istanbul has historically been a hub of migration flows due to its geopolitical importance as well as economical and sociocultural position. In a contemporary context, Istanbul plays a significant role as a destination and transit space for refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migration flows.

Due to its strategic location on the so called Eastern Mediterranean route¹, the externalization of the EU border regime, the recent armed conflicts in neighboring countries such as Syria, Iran and Iraq and further Afghanistan and Pakistan, the war in Ukraine and the political situation in Russia, the repression of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang, China as well as conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa, Istanbul continues to be an important site of migration phenomena.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this research is to map the control mechanisms of migration in relation to the Istanbul region. As a first step in the research process, relevant features of the control systems are identified, quantified and localized.

In a further step, the relation between these different physical and virtual features is analysed in order to understand them as a system. As guiding questions for the mapping process, the following research questions are posed:

How are borderscapes² used as a filtration and control system of human migration and how are they manifested in the research area?



Figure 01. Shared border – Syria - Turkey

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK · POSITIONING ON THE CONTENT (MIGRATION AND BORDERS)

Our research focuses on spatial crystallizations of migration and their (re) active and ever changing relation to different types of borders, considering our (shifting) role as architects. going beyond common studies of push and pull factors or statistical reports on numbers, origins and destinations and beyond the common understanding of the term border as purely the border line demarcating the sovereign territory of a state.

Migration flows are a global system which can not be studied locally isolated. Transit spaces of migration like Istanbul are also connected to other parts of the world through waiting and hope, especially for migrants from war regions or restrictive regimes who are waiting in safer places for a potential return in an unknown future. For this reason, the map is addressing connections to selected countries of origin and destination of migratory movements and the borders that migrants face before or after their stay in Turkey.

Upon entry migrants have to cross the national borders. The control of migration through surveillance mechanisms is constantly increasing throughout the years with Turkey building up walls in its neighboring countries to prevent the massive flow of refugees trying to flee war, conflict, or poverty. Such are the

neighbouring countries to prevent the massive flow of refugees trying to flee war, conflict, or poverty. Such are the cases of Syria and Iran, with their borders being controlled at a maximum degree with guards even shooting at undocumented refugees trying to cross over. The mountainous terrain is yet another physical border which prevents the crossings, therefore a topographical aspect which had to be included on the map. In the case of sea borders, such as the Greek islands in close proximity to the shores of Turkey, the situation remains severely controlled. Not only push-backs by the coast-guard but the temporary reception centers (mostly defined as camps/ detention camps) raised by Greek and EU authorities aim to monitor the incoming flows of refugees. Specific mechanisms have been installed such as cameras, drones and the necessary biometric data taken by each undocumented refugee arriving on the islands³. Curfews and the erection of fences and even walls at the perimeter of these camps are some of the measures taken the past years by the Greek authorities, also funded by the EU⁴. Thus, the borderline becomes a borderscape with its mechanisms reaching as far as Athens, where the control measurements are all monitored by the ‘Centaur’ protection system employed by the Greek Ministry of Migration⁵.

The line on political maps designating a state’s boundaries is still significant in geopolitics since sovereignty of nation states is still currently related with the demarcation and eventually safeguarding of the national borders. Depending on how much it is pressured by various fluxes at various points, this line might have distinct physical forms. State borders remain important in the research debate since they are at the center of geopolitics, but they are viewed as institutions operating with multilayered control mechanisms. For that reason, a map solely including the borderline would blend out other important aspects.

“The traditional image of borders is still inscribed onto maps in which discrete sovereign territories are separated by lines and marked by different colors. This image has been produced by the modern history of the state, and we must always be aware of its complexities. [...] Migration control has only quite recently become a prominent function of political borders. [...] Today borders are not merely geographical margins or territorial edges. They are complex social institutions, which are marked by tensions between practices of border reinforcement and border crossing.”⁶ Beyond the state borders we examine socioeconomic, cultural and spatial borders, which are different for different people and also contribute in shaping and directing migration flows. Migration control takes place both along the borderline and inside state territory, in airports, bus stations, immigration offices, as well as in everyday life in economic, social, family and cultural practices. Thus, social realities on the ground incorporate borders. “The border is now considered a dynamic process that transverses location and spatial scales.”

Mezzadra and Neilson claim that “to analyze the pervasive character of the border’s operations [...] we need a more complex and dynamic conceptual language than that which sustains images of walls and exclusion.”⁷ In that context the developed map shows that physical border infrastructures like fences, drones and surveillance cameras, are just one of many layers of obstacles constructed by the sovereignties.

“Even the most physically intimidating of these new walls serve to regulate rather than exclude legal and illegal migrant labor”, producing a zone of indistinction “between law and non-law of which flexible production has need”.⁸ Consequently, the map shows that the irregular and illegal paths through the system are not only created through the users, but that their existence is also caused through the design of the system itself.

The multilayered legislative system of migration control is part of the institutionalized border regime. It can be overcome either illegally (but then into an often precarious status), or legally by significant financial means through the Golden Passport regulation. Borders as institutions create a variety of stratifications and dichotomies, resulting in the emergence of new symbolic domains and parallel

worlds in the daily lives of migrants. These common borders include visas, residency permits, employment permits, financial requirements, communication barriers, etc. that govern migrant status, define migrant rights, and bend time with systematic delays and eclectic permeability. Not being able or not knowing how to fulfill official requirements, some people are forced to take irregular and illegal paths past and through the system of control, which puts them in a precarious position. With the help of socio-spatial and economic segregation, the creation of a pool of inexpensive labor that can be taken advantage of, among other effects, these symbolic or intangible borders and the spaces they produce become ingrained in the urban fabric. The urban fabric is then shaped in accordance with human geographies as a function of border and migration regimes. For this reason, both the legislative control mechanisms migrants have to navigate through and the resulting spatial manifestations in the city of Istanbul are shown on the map.

The permeability of these borders depends not only on the authorities, but also on the migrants' individual network, skills, financial capacity as well as luck or coincidence. In-between and on the margins the migration control system creates the trajectories of migrants are always individual and a function of various factors and can therefore not be exhaustively classified and systematized. By including a few exemplary trajectories or testimonies of migrants in the map we can illustrate how borders and migration regimes operate and what impacts this has both on the people and the research area.

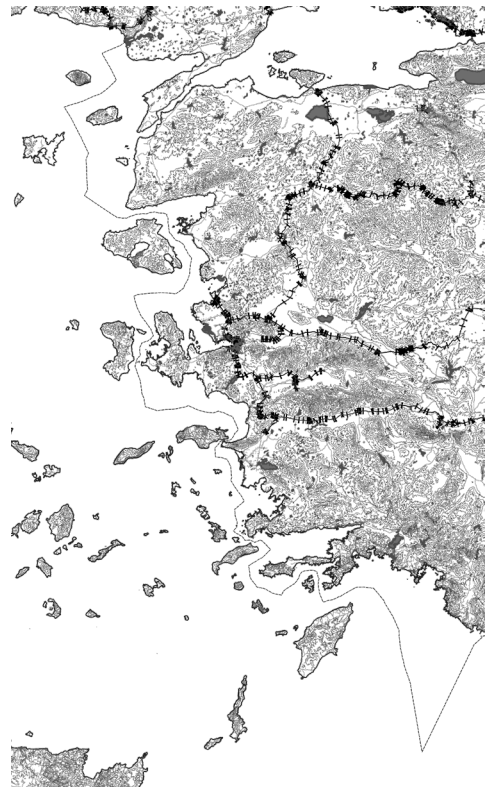


Figure 02. Shared Border (Maritime) - Greece -

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK · POSITIONING ON MAPPING MIGRATION (REPRESENTATION)

As the research itself, the representation of it consists of three thematic parts. These three parts are seen on the map as 1) an outside ring, representing the topographical condition and surveillance infrastructures of the Turkish borders, 2) a localisation of representative places in the research area and 3) selected individual paths through the systems. As the legislative framework of migration control is a virtual construct, but also has physical manifestations that can be localized topographically, the chosen form of research visualization is a hybrid between a diagram and a map.

The act of mapping is the act of recording, and the act of recording requires the action of understanding the situation or an object, so to understand the given situation or a thing, the consumption of information is inevitable, whether it is from the mainstream media or the academic world. Yet, as mentioned by Griffey in her article, credited to the technological advancement in hardware and software, we live in the most distracted era in human history, with information constantly and easily accessible to everyone. As a result, the quality and quantity of the data become irrelevant as information becomes “infinite” for both the individual and the collective.

In the end, it is about finding the perfect point of relevance, asking the right question, filtering necessary information, then representing it in the most effective way that symbolizes and contains such content.

From this point, the act of “mapping” is no longer a mere act of recording but a gesture and method that helps us as both the individual and collective to intellectually build a unique language that tells the stories and meaning of our research topic, which in our case that is migration.

The manifestation of socio-spatial and political complexities can be understood as a sequential event. It works as a cause and effect, while political complexities act as the cause and socio-spatial as a consequence. The correspondence to this momentous event has been successfully captured via the representation technique used in our collective map. The geometrical shape of a “circle and ring” has been employed as the primary visual representation of our collaborative map.

A circle often indicates that a specific target or an object is framed within the boundary. Thus, to read the map, the reader must first follow a solid hierarchical order, reading the map from the outer ring to the inside, which again suggests the presence of an intense sequence and hierarchy, representing the very accent of socio-spatial and political complexities.

At the beginning of the migration map, the purpose of the survey should be determined by choosing the research method. To a specific extent, migration maps expose control mechanisms, not representing flows but showing what hinders, restricts, prolongs and changes them. A static map is, therefore, not incompatible with a dynamic migration process. The map is an expressive device associated with any art, politics or science. However, as migration needs to be measured in terms of spatial and temporal data, variables and invariants must be identified. Migration flows can be measured in terms of the number of people crossing the border at a particular location at a particular time, a matter of counting the movements taking place and counting them at a precise point. It is also possible to measure between two points, where the migration is reconstructed from absolute quantitative data afterwards⁹. This set of maps combines both approaches within the framework of a surveillance system to reproduce migration lines narratively.

The decision for the design of the map was based on abstract diagrams in order to represent the fleeing phenomenon of migration, in relation to the topographical borders with a few details such as infrastructure and border crossings.

Mapping as a representational technique gives us the freedom to explore the theme of migration in different ways than just its geographical characteristics. Mapping with its interpretative potential opens ways to explore flows or processes and thereby linking physical and non-physical aspects through the tool of mapping.

On the debates around migration, maps and mapping supposedly used to visualize/represent migration flows, politics and practices often serve as means of pushing a visible or hidden agenda advocating for or against certain groups, movements, governance, management and politics, creating dichotomies of “good” vs “bad” etc. Common visualizations of data on migration flows are problematic in multiple ways since they often reduce humans to pixels or dots or arrows moving from A to B, oversimplifying and dehumanizing a migrant’s journey, which is most of the time rather complex. A further issue is the centrality of Europe and portrayal of migrant flows as invasion arrows. On the other end of the spectrum, alternative mapping can also be problematic, extrapolating a single story to a general truth or romanticizing migrant struggles. Our mapping is an attempt to propose a different take on migration representation in the in-between of the mentioned spectrum, an effort to demonstrate complexity and layering rather than take sides on migration rhetoric.

Multiple publications, such as *Clashing Cartographies*, *Migrating Maps: Mapping and the Politics of Mobility at the External Borders of E.U. rope* or *Mapping the Migratory Movements*, *The migration map trap. On the invasion arrows in the cartography of migration*,

This is not an Atlas, *Cartographies of migration and mobility as levers of deferral policies* are some of the sources problematizing the representation forms of migration in cartography and proposing alternatives or counter practices serve as theoretical underpinning of our developed mapping strategy.

The map shows that associated with and behind the territorial and state borders, migrants have to overcome several other kinds of obstacles in order to enter and remain in the waiting room of transit, or even integrate into society. The construct of administrative barriers is depicted as a categorizing system of filters that assigns a certain status to anyone who enters it, mostly based on the country of origin. The borders between different statuses are mostly created by a denial of access to certain aspects of society; permits give passage through them. Time plays an important role in the mechanism, both for control in the shape of expiration dates and waiting periods, but also besides through processing times.

Territorial borders straightforward control mechanisms, thus are contradicted by a more remote yet equally efficient control system. ...

The different elements of the map and their relation with each other raise questions about scale, its relevance and representation. As the diagram-map hybrid does not only work with the measurement of distances (topographical borders), but also quantity (number of people) and time (paths taken through the system), it operates on different scales. The relations between these different scales is very relevant, as they also determine the intensity of an obstacle (e.g. waiting time for the issuing of a required document increases by a higher number of people applying for it). The visualized processes of migration are only a snapshot of a changing and adaptive, non-scalable system. According to anthropologist Andrea Tsing, “scalability [...] is the ability to expand without distorting the

framework”¹⁰; that means for the subject of migration with its nature of being a network of transformative relationships it is not scalable as it is changed in its nature when project elements are added.

One challenge in visualizing the legal framework is its adaptation according to the migration flows, and therefore its constantly changing situation, as well as its outsourcing into third countries in order to prevent the influx of migrants.

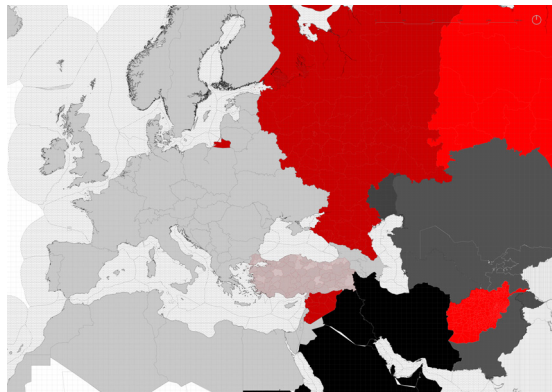


Figure 03. Shared Borders - The immediate nations

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND SOURCES

- Quantitative research

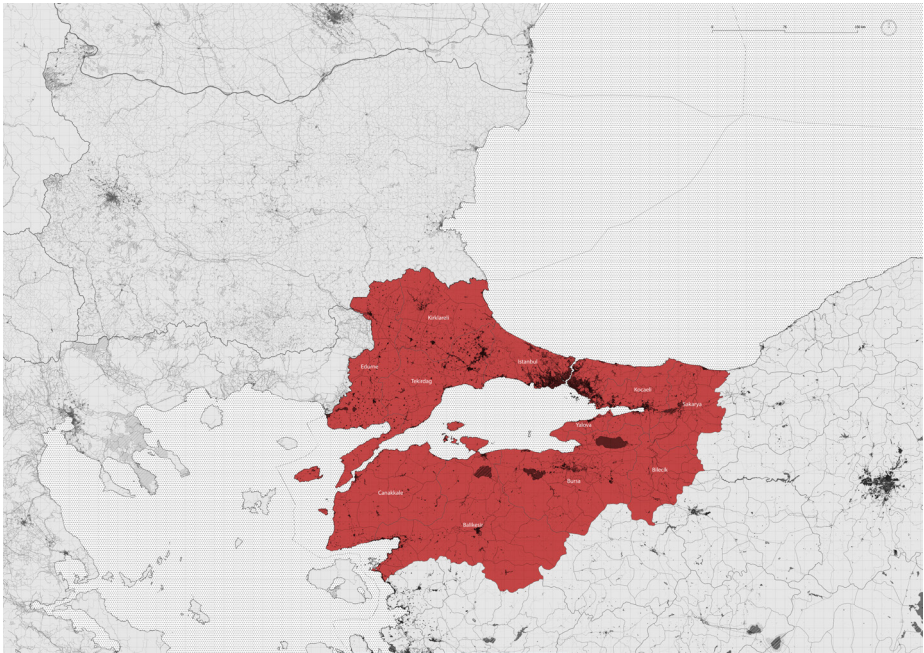
- statistical data, mostly from websites run by governments or international organisations (e.g. the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management, but also IOM, EU and more)

The major problem about quantitative research on the topic of migration is the lack of reliable data for a lot of processes, as many of them are happening in illegality or legal gray zones and are therefore not well-documented. This causes a very high discrepancy between official and unofficial data. While the numbers of issued official documents such as visa or residence permits are available and suggest to be precise, the estimation ranges for undocumented movements often are often extremely broad (e.g. the estimated number of Kurdish people in Istanbul ranges from 2 to 4 million people¹¹). A solely quantitative approach to the topic of migration contains the danger of not being able to visualize the humans and their experienced tragedies.

- Qualitative research through

- journalistic sources, such as interviews and reports
- analysis of group chats (e.g. telegram) and facebook groups
- academic sources (research papers)

Interpreting data from different reports or interviews on the same topic (e.g. the search for a trafficker in Istanbul) and combining them into one element on the map contains a certain degree of assumption, speculation and generalization, but nevertheless, it can be a valuable tool to visualize a multiplicity of stories.



FOOTNOTE

1 A term widely used and specified by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), see <https://frontex.europa.eu/we-know/migratory-routes/eastern-mediterranean-route/>

2 Borders are shaped by an ensemble of regulations, semantics and other practices and discourses source

3 Petridi, Corina “Greek camps for asylum seekers to introduce partly automated surveillance systems”, algorithmwatch, Last modified April, 21, 202, <https://algorithmwatch.org/en/greek-camps-surveillance/>

4 Vallianatou, Anna “Lesvos:How EU Asylum policy created a refugee prison in paradise”, chathamhouse, Last Modified July, 28, 2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/07/lesvos-how-eu-asylum-policy-created-refugee-prison-paradise>

5 Petridi, Corina “Greek camps for asylum seekers to introduce partly automated surveillance systems”, algorithmwatch, Last modified April, 21, 202, <https://algorithmwatch.org/>

[en/greek-camps-surveillance/](https://algorithmwatch.org/en/greek-camps-surveillance/)

6 Mezzadra and Neilson, 3

7 Mezzadra and Neilson, 7

8 Brown, 16-17

9 <https://journals.openedition.org/remi/8803#quotation>

10 Tsing, p.523

11 <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2104027,00.html>

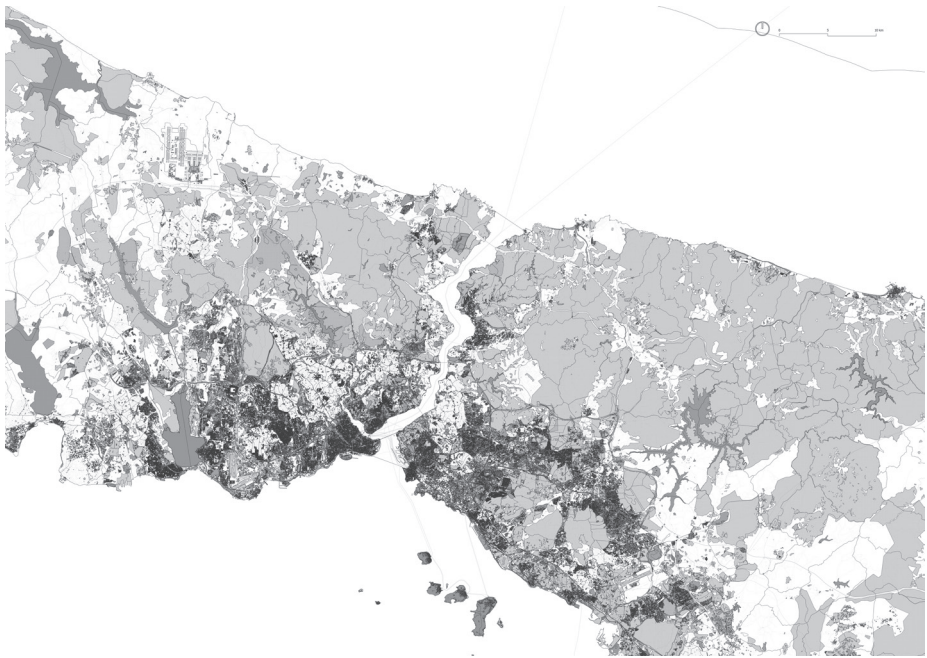


Figure 05. The first anchor point - Istanbul

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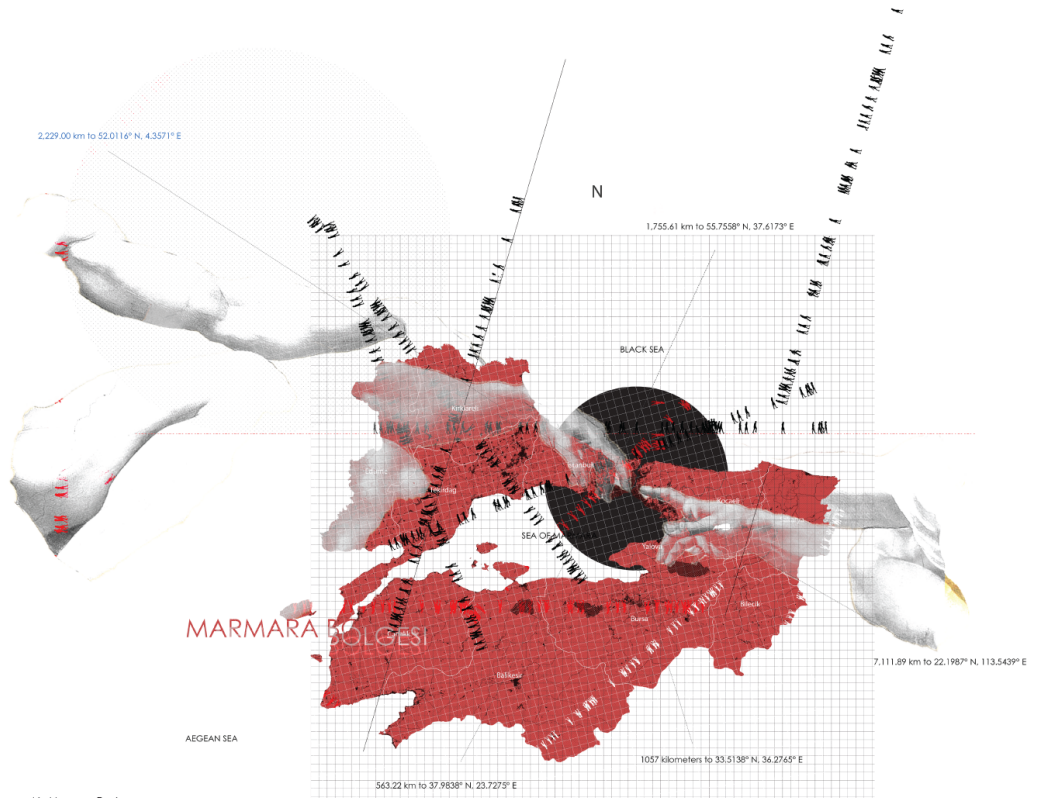
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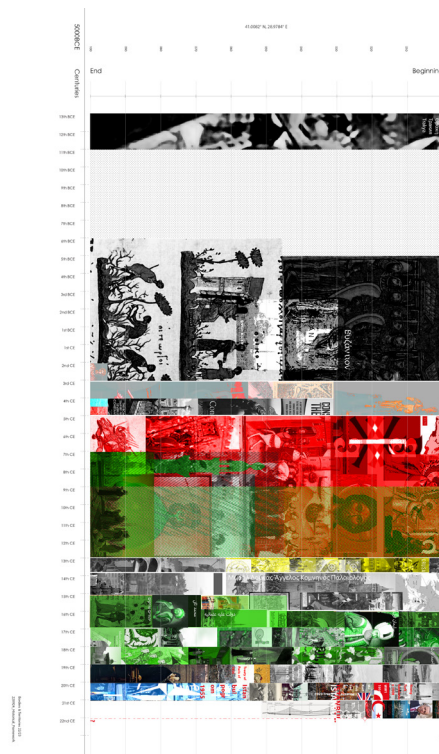


Irregular Movement in Marmara Region

MIGRATION HISTORY

This map shows the historical timeline of today's Turkey, where a few significant periods have been recorded. For example, the appearance of the Byzantine Period during ancient Greece time, also when Istanbul was chosen as the capital of the Roman Empire in 4th century by Constantine the first, and of course the first crusade in 10th century, and the slowly emerging of the Ottoman empire.

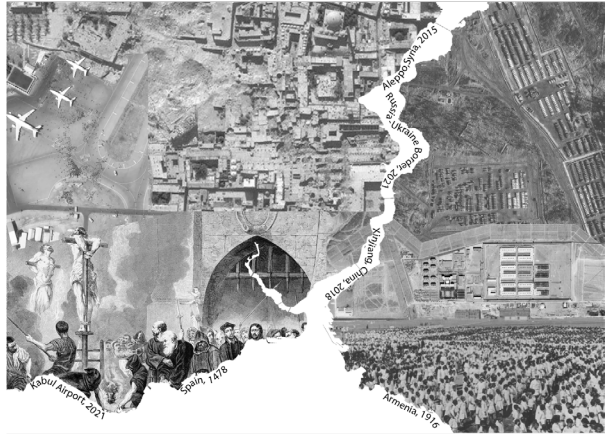
In today, with different regional and political complexity, in particular the middle east region, the city is experiencing national crisis, like illegal migration, terrorism, and poverty, which consequentially affects not only the society but also the spatial development of the city.



MIGRATION CAUSES

Since centuries, Istanbul has been an important destination for refugee movements caused by different push-factors, such as economical conditions or wars.

The comparably liberal atmosphere of the metropolis and the variety of existing communities has also made it a shelter for victims of religious, political and ethnical persecution.



Valentin Gies

“fleeing causes”

LEGAL BORDERS

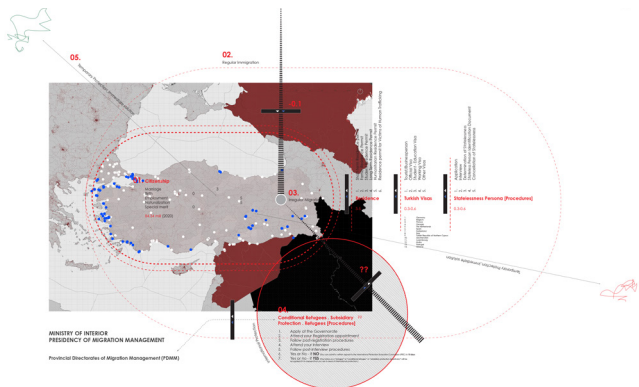
The crisis in middle east eventually made Turkey the land of transit migration, a checkpoint to the West. Just in 2022, there were around 6000 people from Syria used Turkey as a transit point to migrate to the United State, and around 1000 people also from Syria used Turkey, to move to the Netherlands.



Mathew Tong

The land of transit migrants

This map shows the different stream classes of Turkey, where for refugees, they can apply the protection visa, as for us visiting, for those who are holding an European passport you can enter the country for 3 months without a visa; the premium class of course would be the citizenship of Turkey.



Mathew Tong

The new type of border

BORDERLINE:

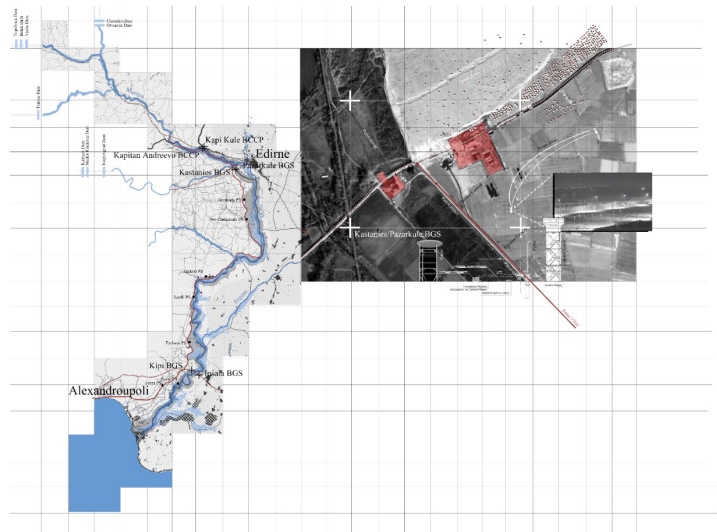
GREEK-TURKISH BORDER

EVROS/MERIC

Given the fact that currently sovereignty of nation states is still associated with the demarcation and eventually protection of the national borderline, the line on the political maps delineating the limits of a state remains important in geopolitics. This line can have various physical manifestations, depending on how much it is stressed by different flows at various points, as we noticed by mapping border infrastructures in the Greek-Turkish and Bulgarian-Turkish borders. By studying border infrastructures one realizes that they have a spatial footprint thicker than a line on the map. They consist of surveillance zones, buffer zones, checkpoints extending

to transport stations, police stations, camps and deportation centers in border cities, as far as airports and migration offices in Istanbul. Considering digital infrastructures used to inhibit or facilitate migration, borders extend even further in control centers of surveillance systems in Athens or in the origin countries, where migrants start routing

through information provided in social media groups. Borders are no longer just the delimitations of the sovereign territories of a nation state, they are elaborate, complex and multilayered borderscapes extending into physical and virtual spaces far away from the borderline itself.



Myrto Klimi

Geographical, physical, digital, legal migration control infrastructures along the Greek-Turkish border



“virtual infrastructure of the Istanbul Region”

Valentin Gies

Many physical infrastructures of migration are corresponding with non-physical systems that enable the physical manifestations and vice versa. Digital platforms, social media and payment service providers play an important role for enabling migratory movements, as well as the telecommunication infrastructure that they are based on. Legal frameworks have direct physical consequences that enable, control or prevent migration.

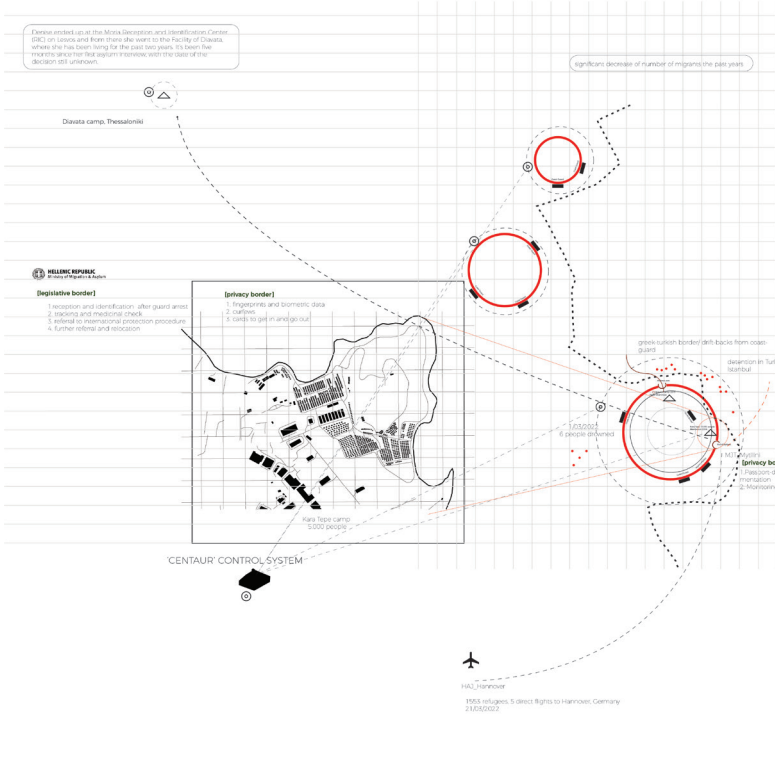
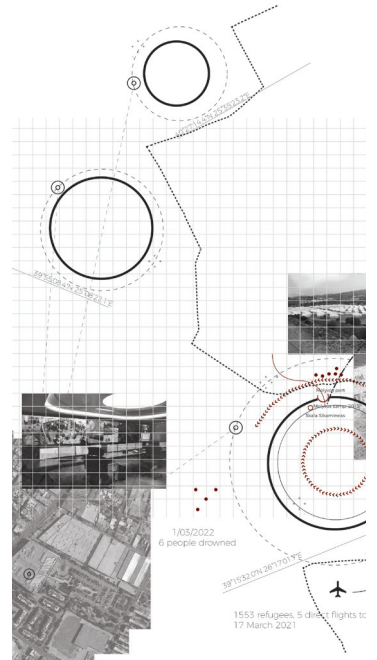
BORDERLINE:

GREEK TURKISH BORDER

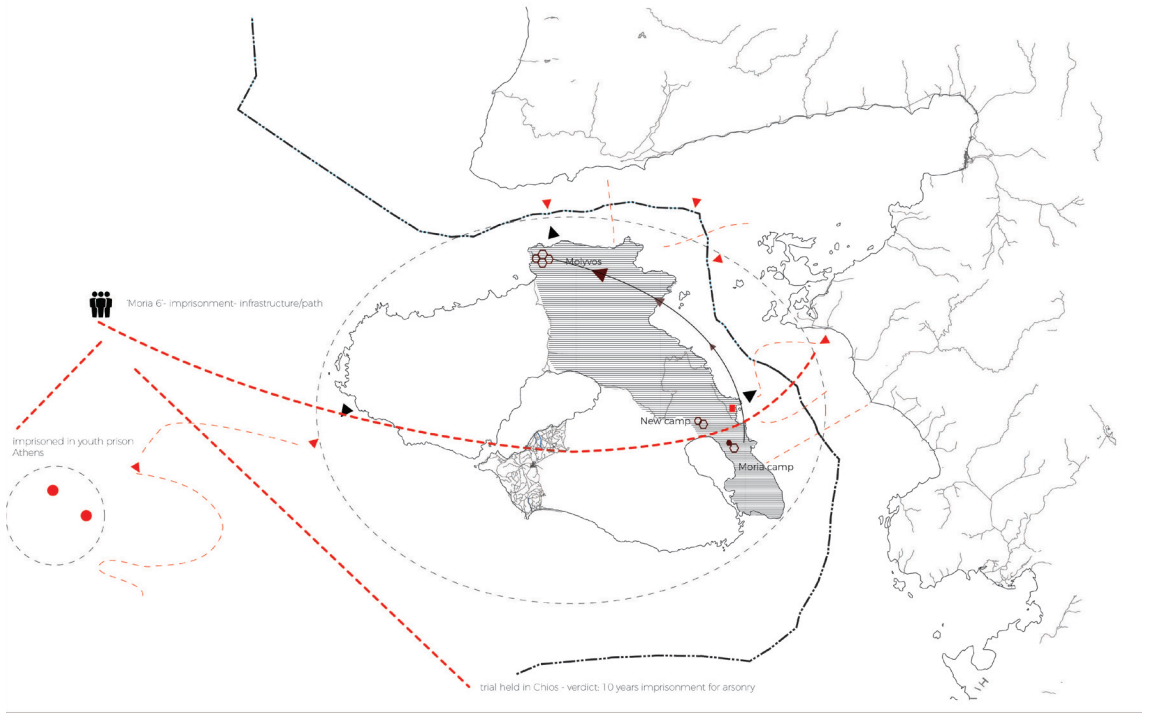
LESVOS

An important entry point among the Greek islands due to their proximity with Turkey, remains Lesvos, even with the number of incoming illegal migrant flows now being reduced. In this case, the situation remains severely controlled. Not only pushbacks by the coastguard but the temporary reception centers raised by Greek and EU authorities aim

to monitor the refugees. Specific measures have been installed such as cameras, drones, and the necessary biometric data taken by each undocumented refugee arriving on the islands. Curfews and the erection of fences and even walls at the perimeter of those camps are some of the measures taken the past years by the Greek authorities, also founded by the EU. Thus, the borderline becomes a borderscape with its surveillance reaching as far as Athens, where the control measurements are all monitored by the ‘Centaur’ protection system employed by the Greek Ministry of Migration.



Virginia Lazarou

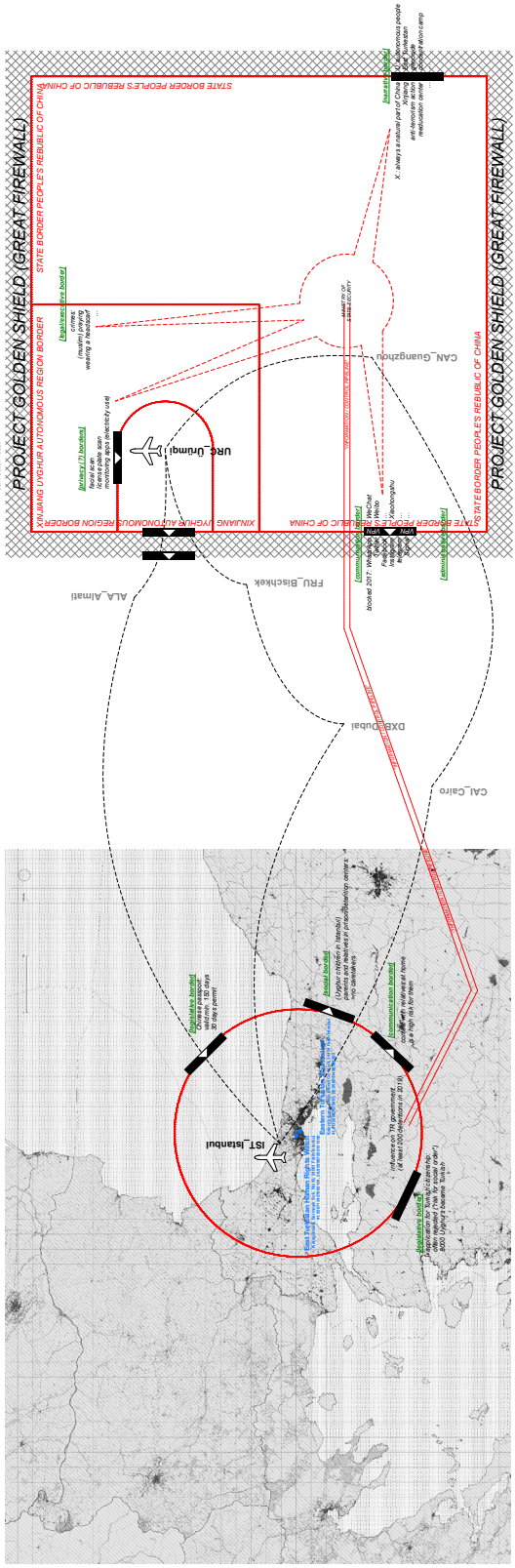



 surveillance of confinement infrastructure

Virginia Lazarou

BORDERLINE: ISTANBUL AIRPORTS UYGHURS

In recent years, Turkey and specifically Istanbul has also developed into a place of shelter for Uyghurs, a muslim minority in North-Western China that according to several sources faces increasing surveillance and persecution in their home land. The formation of a growing Uyghur community in Istanbul has led to the creation of several organisations, such as the Uighur Science and Enlightenment Foundation, which was opened in 2015. There, students of aged from four to 16 study the Uyghur language and culture, which is treated as a criminal offence in their home country.



Valentin Gies

“migration barriers from Xinjiang to the Istanbul area”

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