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RECONSTRUCTING THE EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION OF IMMIGRATION DETENTION INFRASTRUCTURE IN GREECE (1993-2018)

Reconstruindo a expansão e consolidação da infraestrutura de detenção de imigrantes na Grécia (1993-2018)

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Abstract. Since the early 1990s, Greek migration policies have been characterized by limited pathways to regularization and relying heavily on immigration detention. Despite many studies about Greece's legal framework, policies, and migration movements towards the country, immigration detention infrastructure received almost no attention in the literature. This study reconstructs the expansion of immigration detention in the country between 1993-2018. It uses a methodology based on an analysis of reports made by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), whose descriptions of facilities were systematized and georeferenced for a territorial and qualitative analysis. We find that the expansion of immigration detention infrastructure in the country occurred in three stages, corresponding to different spatial tactics of migration control. The results are discussed in light of the growing literature on immigration detention.

Keywords: immigration detention; (i)mobility; Mediterranean; Greece.

Resumo. *Desde o início dos anos 1990, as políticas migratórias gregas se caracterizaram por limitações para regularização dos migrantes e pela utilização da detenção por motivos migratórios. Apesar da existência de muitos estudos sobre o marco legal grego, as políticas migratórias e a migração para o país, a infraestrutura de detenção por motivos migratórios quase não recebeu atenção da literatura. Este estudo reconstrói a expansão da estrutura usada com vistas à detenção migratória no país, entre 1993 e 2018. Para isto, utiliza uma metodologia baseada na análise dos informes feitos pelo Comitê Europeu para a Prevenção da Tortura e do Tratamento Cruel e Degradante (CPT), cujas descrições das instalações foram sistematizadas e georeferenciadas para permitir uma análise territorial e qualitativa. Identificamos que a expansão da infraestrutura de detenção migratória no país ocorreu em três estágios, que correspondem a diferentes*

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táticas espaciais de controle migratório; discutimos estes resultados à luz da literatura sobre detenção migratória.

***Palavras-chave**: detenção de imigrantes; (i)mobilidade; Mediterrâneo; Grécia.*

1. Introduction

Greece's history with migration during the 20th century differs significantly from other European countries. After World War II, the country saw roughly a million people leave, either as refugees from the Greek Civil War or as guest workers seeking opportunities in northern European countries, the United States and Australia (Fakiolas, 2000), many of which started to return during the 1970s (Lyberaki, 2008). The end of the 1980s brought an accelerated arrival of migrants to Greece, exacerbated after the geopolitical changes in 1989, coming mostly from the Balkans and Eastern Europe, among whom Albanians were a prominent group (Triandafyllidou, 2007).

Over a decade, Albanian men and women came to comprise more than half of all migrants in the country, an estimated 438,000 (57,5%) in 2001 (Triandafyllidou, 2010a). Workers from other nationalities such as Bulgaria and Poland also engaged in permanent or circular migration during the period, often seeking employment in seasonal industries such as agriculture or tourism (Fakiolas 2000). But if, during the 1990s, routes crossed over the mountainous borders between Northern Greece and Albania, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria, by the mid-2000s, the Greco-Turkish borders – both land and sea – gained prominence, with new mixed migration movements from different origins.

Since 2008, a discernible change took place with the arrival of Middle Eastern migrants and asylum seekers, a trend that remains today (Dimitriadi, 2018). For them, Greece was often seen as a transit country in their journeys towards other European countries, although their routes and strategies could imply extended periods in Greece (Papadopoulou, 2004). Studies about transit migration are limited and do not allow for an estimate of how many persons travelled through Greece towards other destinations (Maroukis, 2010). However, there is evidence of the Greco-Turkish border becoming the main entry point of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers to the European Union (EU) (Cheliotis, 2013).

When the Syrian Civil War – which started in 2011 and is still ongoing at the time of writing – escalated, Greece saw an increase in migrant arrivals: in 2013, 8,517 undocumented Syrians were apprehended; that number jumped to 32,520 in 2014, and almost half a million (499,495) in 2015 (Triandafyllidou and Mantanika, 2018). Those numbers declined after 2016, and in 2018 the estimated border crossings were around 50,000 people, in total, by both land and sea (UNHCR, 2019).

1.1. Immigration detention

The present study builds on the literature about immigration detention to explore its evolution in Greece from 1993, when the first specialized facility was inaugurated, up to 2018[1]. Existing studies of immigration detention explored the developments in policy and law, within countries and in cross-national comparisons (Flynn, 2014). Recent literature focuses on the impact of detention on migrants (Ryo, Peacock, 2019), and their families and loved ones (Golash-Boza, 2019). Other studies addressed the impact of immigration detention infrastructures on the life of the communities where they are placed (Briskman, Fiske, Dimasi, 2012; Friese, 2012). Although less explored, comparisons and links between immigration detention and the criminal justice system have received some attention (Loyd, Mitchelson, Burridge, 2012). Geographical studies contributed to conceptualize detention, as well as other migration control practices (Martin, Mitchelson, 2009; Mountz *et al*., 2013). Some authors also point at the continuities between neoliberal carceral practices, including in immigration detention, and the legacies of colonialism and early racial capitalism, tracing the roots of contemporary practices to strategies developed centuries ago (Axster *et al*., 2021).

Discussing the role of search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea, Stierl proposes that a network of containment spaces including state, commercial, and humanitarian vessels, ports, and other spaces – where migrants can be retained for prolonged periods – conforms a 'carceral seascape' (Stierl, 2021). Once in a receiving country, migrants' 'unruly' trajectories can be controlled by moving them around different spaces in the territory of a country and the use of information and communication technologies, biometric identification, fingerprinting, and other strategies (Tazzioli, Garelli, 2020), these last ones, referred to as e-carceration (Axster *et al*., 2021). Taken together these studies point at a myriad of practices that go beyond carceral facilities but are entangled to them.

The present study adds to this growing literature by exploring the expansion of detention infrastructure in Greece, through a series of reports that were seldom explored as a data source, despite being often cited in the literature. From our data, we identify three main periods: during the 1990s, immigration detention concentrated mainly in the metropolitan area of Athens; from the early 2000s, the focus shifted to the land border with Turkey, and since 2015, the easternmost islands stand out.

The systematic analysis of CPT reports offers an opportunity to outline trends in the Greek immigration detention system, using a methodology that can be reproduced elsewhere and used for future comparisons with other countries

[1] We chose to work only with data up until the last parliamentary elections, which took place in 2019.

in the Council of Europe system. With that in mind, it looks at continuities and changes in the detention infrastructure. The research is guided by two questions: a. How did the material infrastructure of detention expand (or contract) in the Greek territory over the years?; b. Is it possible to identify a territorial and historical pattern of facilities that comprise the detention infrastructure?

2. Methods

2.1. Data Source

The data used in this study was constructed from the reports of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), originated from the visits of the Committee to Greece between the years 1993-2018. The reports contain unstructured narrative data, detailing the CPT's observations. The narratives are constructed by the experts who take part in the inspection, after visiting facilities and talking to officials, policemen, and detainees, among others.

All 11 reports produced between 1993-2018 were analysed, of which 2 were excluded: 1996, when only the Attica State mental hospital for children was visited, and 2015, when the visit focused on the criminal justice system and children under detention, including migrant children. The reports were fully analysed, and all spaces and narratives that refer to migrants in administrative detention were included, in specialized facilities or not.

2.2. Geodata

The maps used were obtained in shapefile format from the Eurostat (Eurostat e GISCO 2016) and the Greek government's online Geodata repository (www.geodata.gov.gr). Data for land use and transportation routes were obtained from OpenStreetMap (OpenStreetMap contributors, 2017). Eurostat geodata represents international boundaries, and Greek geodata represents administrative regions (Greek Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction, 2015), both using WGS84 projection.

2.3. Categorization of facilities

The types of facilities visited by the CPT during these 25 years were classified into the following types: a. Pre-departure center; b. Police station; c. Reception and Identification Centre; d. Transfer center; e. Border Guard Post; f. Port Authority.

Of these, two are specialized facilities dedicated to administrative immigration detention: Pre-departure centers, for those who will be forcibly removed from the country; and Reception and Identification Centres, for new arrivals pending identification procedures. Transfer centers are spaces where migrants stay pending a transfer to other facilities.

Police stations, Port Authorities, and Border Guard Posts are not specialized in immigration detention, but are part of regular law enforcement structures and may include regular cells or rooms where the CPT observed immigration detention.

Codes were attributed following the reports' identifications and descriptions; for instance, "Omonia Police Station" would receive the code used for Police Stations. In total, 92 facilities holding migrants in administrative detention were categorized.

2.4. Georeferencing

Coordinates for the facilities were obtained using Google Maps. In general, police stations, border guard posts, port authorities and airports were geolocated in Google Maps, with their coordinates available, as were Moria (Lesvos) and Amygdaleza (Attica) detention centers. As for the remaining facilities, the coordinates used were those of municipalities where they were located. In total, of 92 facilities included in the database, 51% (N=47) were located using Google maps; 48% (N=44) received the municipality or neighbourhood's coordinates and 1% (N=1) were not identified.

2.5. Analysis

The analysis explored the territorial expansion of facilities between 1993-2018. Information about name; type of facility; coordinates; year and source report; was added to a database in MS Access for analysis.

From this database, we exported tables with the types, names and geographic coordinates of all facilities visited each year. This was added to a GIS environment containing Greece's political and administrative divisions as well as land uses and transportation routes, generating a map of points of facilities types. With these data we performed a territorial and chronological analysis of spaces used for detention and their dispersion. While the resulting individual maps (one for each report) are not shown in this article, they lay the ground for the construction of the chronological analysis in three stages. Maps were constructed using the software QGIS version 3.2.3.

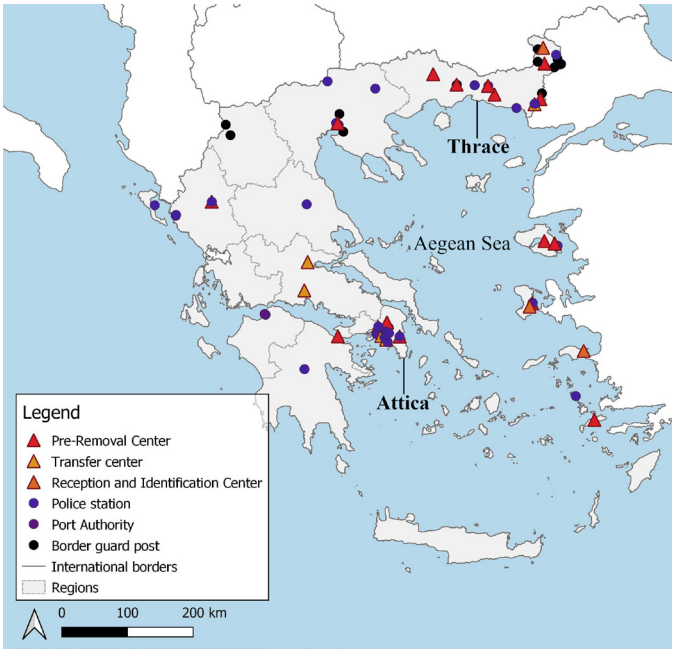
A qualitative analysis of the reports supported the description of detention spaces' characteristics throughout the country and across time, allowing us to explore the links between the interior of the facilities and their geographical and historical context.

3. Findings

Over the years that our study spans, immigration detention expanded throughout the territory, from the spaces initially identified in the metropolitan area of Athens in 1993. The regions of Attica and Thrace, and the Aegean islands,

have a higher density of facilities with migrants in administrative detention, but the typology of these facilities varies by region, evolving through different uses of space in migration control (figure 1).

Figure 1 - Spaces where the CPT has observed administrative detention of migrants in Greece. Source: own elaboration based on georefencing of sites described in CPT reports (1993-2018)



Source: © Eurogeographics (international borders). (CC BY v.3.0) Geodata.gov.gr (administrative units).

Our results show a remarkable expansion of detention infrastructure, with trends that might not be evident from following the developments in the legal framework and migration policies. The evolving landscape of detention took shape through three main periods: in 1993-2001, it mostly took place in police stations in the Metropolitan Area of Athens, with an incipient emergence of designated facilities for immigration detention. Between 2001-2015, border guard posts and port authorities join police stations as detention spaces and several new specialized centers, with a carceral-style layout, enter into activity, particularly in the region of Thrace, where Greece shares a land border with Turkey. From 2015 on, the EU 'hotspot' strategy gains strength in the Aegean islands through Reception and Identification Centers (RICs), combining detention and asylum processing. These are not clear-cut stages, but instead, they overlap, with every new strategy adding up to previous ones – whose

facilities often don't cease to be in activity. While this movement was one of expansion, it occurred in different regions and periods through the use of different spatial tactics (Martin, Mitchelson 2009).

The CPT reports between 1993 and 2001 portray a first phase of immigration detention in Greece, when they found migrants in administrative detention mainly in police stations, first in the metropolitan area of Athens (Attica) and, increasingly, in the northern region of Thrace. Police stations received observations from the CPT along the years, and one of its recurrent recommendations is ending prolonged detention[2] in such spaces. Despite variations in intensity, location, and conditions, prolonged detention of migrants in police stations never ceased to be observed.

During those years, designated facilities for administrative immigration detention were in their early stages, the first being inaugurated in 1993. Types of facilities where the CPT observed migrants in administrative detention complexified over the years: in 1993, the commission observed detention under the "Aliens[3] Legislation" only in Athens and the neighbouring municipality of Piraeus (Attica). Administrative detention was found mainly in Police stations, but also in Athens Airport and the newly inaugurated Hellenikon facility (located in a former US military base by the old Athens Airport), where the CPT advised improvements by, among other adjustments, offering more privacy, leisure, and outside exercise to detainees. A follow up visit in 1997, however, found that no such changes had been implemented (CPT/Inf (2001) 18 [Part 1]).

After its inauguration, Hellenikon was followed by specialized centers in Piraeus and Ioannina. In Piraeus, the description of the detention facility resembled Hellenikon, including similar shortcomings in physical structure, reported by the CPT before the facility's entered into service. In Ioannina, close to the Albanian border, migrants were held in a government premise that had other uses, including as a car dump (CPT/Inf (2001) 18 [Part 1]); this strategy of repurposing buildings for immigration detention would be used in other locations over the years.

Until the early 2000s, accumulated apprehensions, mostly of Albanian migrants, led to the staggering figure of over two million deportations (Fakiolas, 2003), with detention becoming part of a routine where the police forces apprehended, arrested, and deported migrants to the neighbouring country, often to have them cross back to Greece soon after. Police stations were the main space where immigration detention occurred, with a few incipient specialized

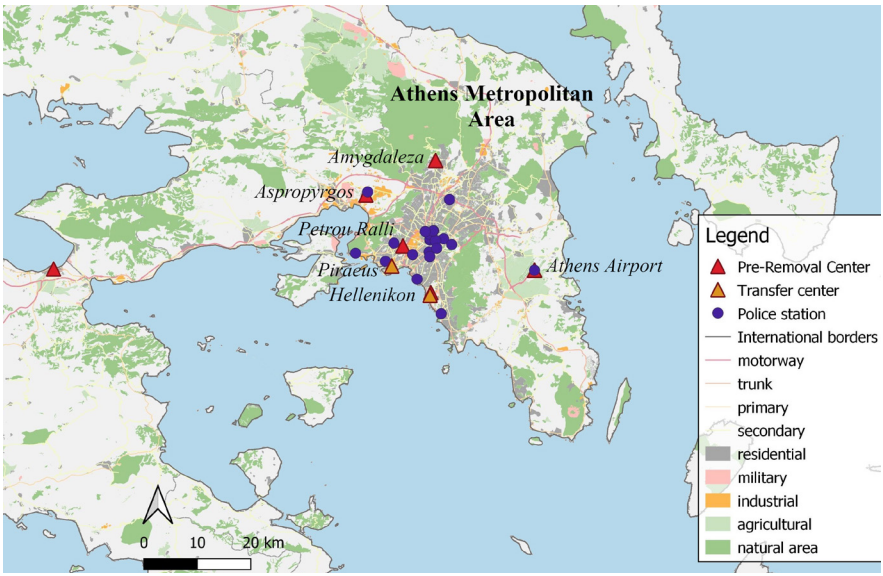
2 Prolonged detention in police stations, border guard posts, and similar facilities, according to the CPT, is one that lasts more than 24 hours (European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), 2017).

3 "Aliens" was the term used to refer to migrants in the early CPT reports, particularly during the 1990s. When quoting these reports, we reproduce the term used in them. In the most recent reports, the term was abandoned.

facilities supporting the deportation logistics, such as Hellenikon or the holding areas in Athens Airport. Because there were limited pathways for regularization, migrants in the country were exposed to the possibility of incarceration and deportation, even if they were a significant part of the workforce and local policemen often bypassed migrant workers during the harvest and tourist seasons (Maroukis, 2010).

Those apprehensions occurred most in urban areas, and the spatial distribution of detention spaces in Attica (figure 2) reflects that. All spaces visited by the CPT in the region are located in Athens Metropolitan Area, with several police stations within the perimeter of the municipality detaining migrants, mostly near the city center. Specialized detention centers are located in the outermost limits of the city.

Figure 2 - Spaces where the CPT has observed administrative detention of migrants in the region of Attica. Source: own elaboration based on georefencing of sites described in CPT reports (1993-2018)



Source: © Eurogeographics (international borders). (CC BY v.3.0) Geodata.gov.gr (administrative units).

Earlier immigration detention centers, particularly Hellenikon (1993), Piraeus (1997) and the holding areas in Athens Airport (1997) were set up either within or close to existing military and transportation infrastructure, but later facilities such as Amygdaleza (2001), Petrou Ralli (2005), and Aspropyrgos (2007) are in mostly industrial areas.

Between 1997 and 2005, regularization programs granted access to a resident permit to thousands of immigrants (Triandafyllidou, 2010b), and, despite shortcomings, safeguarded them from the permanent threat of detention and deportation. Around the same time, towards the end of the 1990s, police stations in the northern region of Thrace began performing administrative detention of migrants. Their spaces were complemented by the use of repurposed empty buildings. The 1999 report describes the establishment of two "transitional detachments" by the Alexandropolis police directorate in the towns of Feres and Orestiada, to hold migrants and asylum seekers apprehended after crossing the land border with Turkey:

> [The transitional detachment in Feres] occupied a makeshift construction resembling a hangar, consisting of two large rooms (some 33 m2) and one smaller room (20 m2). (…) At the time of the visit, 18 Iraqi nationals (including 6 young children) were being held there. They claimed to have spent the previous four days in the holding facility; nevertheless, this appeared to be their fourth or fifth stay there, as they had allegedly been transferred repeatedly between Turkey and Greece in the preceding months. However, it was impossible to establish how long these persons had spent in custody, or indeed how many other persons had been held at the Feres holding facility in the past and for what periods of time, as no custody records were being kept. (CPT/Inf (2001) 18 [Part 2], p. 15-16)

As reported by the CPT, among migrants interviewed for the 1999 report, some claimed they tried to apply for asylum, but to no success (1999, p. 21). Conversations by the Committee with officials of the Alexandropolis police and the Ministry revealed the emerging dynamics at that border and the practice of executing deportations outside the scope of the law. The 2001 report shows further signs of what the CPT names "informal" deportation practices:

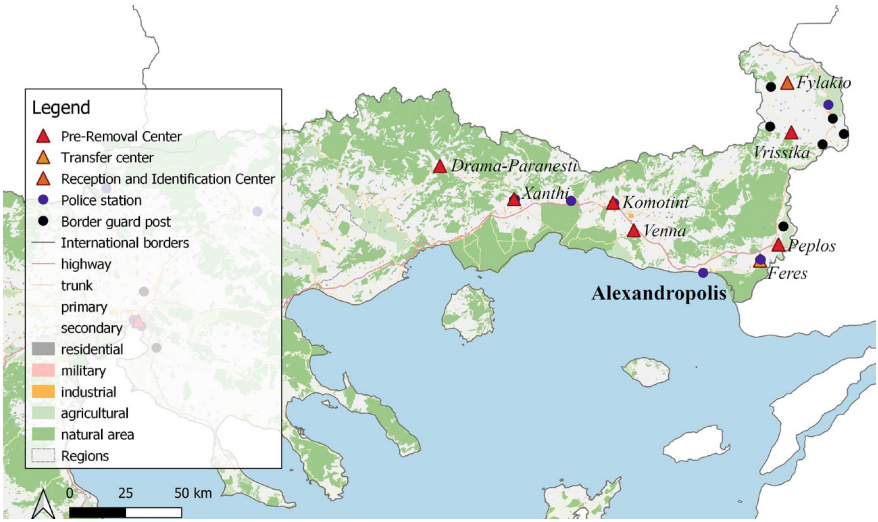
> (…) the CPT has continued to receive information about alleged 'informal' – including group – deportations to Turkey (cf. CPT/Inf (2001) 18, Part II, paragraph 46). The Committee has been led to believe that, (…) on occasion, their lives might have been put at risk (e.g. by being made to cross a river under precarious conditions). In the CPT's view, such removals could well amount in many cases to inhuman or degrading treatment. (CPT/Inf (2002) 31, p. 27)

Over the next years, Thrace would receive many of the committee's visits, which bear witness to growing immigration detention infrastructure in the region, the inauguration of permanent facilities, increased prominence of the Border Guard, and expansion and renovation works in regular police stations. In contrast to what was observed in Attica, in Thrace most sites are not in urban areas, but in towns in the countryside (figure 3). In Alexandropolis, the regional capital, the CPT observed administrative detention of migrants in the headquarters of the local police station, yet specialized detention centers are considerably far.

Meanwhile, new arrivals increasingly reached Greece through Turkey. From the early 2000s, and particularly since 2005, a higher density of facilities detaining migrants emerge near that border, accompanied by a new protagonism

of Border Patrol forces, marking the second period of expansion in immigration detention in the country. This shift exposes a change in the spatial tactics of migration control, from policing migrants in their (urban) destination towards a strategy that aims at intercepting migrants *en route* and that does not necessarily target those who had Greece as their intended destination.

Figure 3 - Spaces where the CPT has observed administrative detention of migrants in the region of Thrace. Source: own elaboration based on georefencing of sites described in CPT reports (1993-2018)



Source: © Eurogeographics (international borders). (CC BY v.3.0) Geodata.gov.gr (administrative units).

This shift in the territorial strategy of migration control comes at a time when the reconfiguration of EU borders that started in the late 1980s with the Schengen agreements reached maturity, relocating the now common borders of the bloc to its southern countries – Greece, Italy, Spain (Gil, 2005). With the decline of migration movements that had Greece as an intended destination, and increase in transit migration towards other European countries, new enforcement structures tended to concentrate alongside migrants' routes, a trend that remained in the following period, when the main routes used by migrants shifted from the land to the sea border between Greece and Turkey.

Successive CPT reports portray the expansion of detention infrastructure, and its deteriorating conditions. The period saw the inauguration of Pre-removal centers in the outskirts of Athens (Petrou Ralli, 2005), and the town of Fylakio (2007). In 2012, at least four new centers were inaugurated: Amygdaleza, reopening in Attica; and Komotini, Drama-Paranesti and Xanthi, in Thrace. New detention centers maintained distinctively carceral characteristics:

> (…) the design of the Petrou Ralli Special Holding Facilities was extremely poor, with rows of cells giving on to a narrow corridor, reminiscent of a gigantic police station rather than a centre meeting the needs for the administrative detention of aliens."(CPT/Inf (2006) 41, p. 22)

Changes were introduced in the strategy of immigration detention by inaugurating a model of joint management of Pre-removal Centers with regional authorities (government and prefectures) in Thrace, with local authorities taking on material conditions, while the national government provided security staff (CPT/Inf (2008) 3, p. 14). While the initiative was at first lauded, towards the end of the decade and particularly after the 2008 crisis, shortcomings were apparent, as indebted local authorities could not keep up with their end of responsibilities:

> Further, the CPT's delegation received information that the detention conditions in [Fylakio] were at risk of deteriorating. Apparently, the Prefecture and the Region have accumulated large debts with private suppliers, which could affect the catering, fumigation, maintenance and cleaning of the facility. (CPT/Inf (2010) 33, p. 33)

Immigration detention in Thrace kept expanding on the period, with an increased role of the border guard, incorporated into the regular police force in 2008 (CPT/Inf (2010) 33 p. 14). In 2011, one year after the adoption of the 'Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management', the CPT warns that a humanitarian crisis is developing in the region, and states that:

> (…) the conditions in which irregular migrants are held would appear to be a deliberate policy by the authorities in order to deliver a clear message that only persons with the necessary identity papers should attempt to enter Greece. Certainly, this is the impression formed by successive CPT delegations ever since the visit in September 2005. (CPT/Inf (2012) 1, p. 9)

The Action Plan is part of a series of measures that characterize those years and include enhanced police presence at the border and in Athens, including operations *Xenios Zeus* (Athens) and FRONTEX RABIT (Evros), leading to thousands of arrests. In 2012, a fence was built in the land border with Turkey (Dimitriadi, 2018), and three new immigration detention centers were inaugurated in Thrace, the first in the region to be farther from the border, alongside the A2 highway (figure 3). In 2013, Fylakio, inaugurated in 2007, received a Reception Center under the asylum and first reception system, thus concentrating detention with both purposes of identification and expulsion.

Facilities with a carceral design multiply, and their location is displaced to peripherical areas, where migrants – many of them who could not be deported anywhere – are 'warehoused' for long periods. Maximum length of detention expands successively (Cheliotis, 2017), and in 2014, an unsuccessful recommendation by the Greek State Legal Council attempts to extend detention indefinitely, through Opinion 44/2014. By then, detention length deadlines were approaching for thousands of migrants apprehended during the 2012 *Xenios Zeus* sweep operations (Cheliotis, 2013).

From those years on, new arrivals through the land border with Turkey plummet and lose protagonism to Aegean islands, a last trend identified in our analysis. Detention on the islands in the maritime border with Turkey stand out since 2015, when the 'hotspot' system was launched (Papoutsi *et al.*, 2019). Island detention is part of a broader trend described in several countries (Coddington *et al.*, 2012; Flynn, 2014; Mountz, Briskman, 2012), where islands are intervened upon 'creatively' as a strategy aiming at migrants' isolation (Mountz, 2012).

In Greece, island detention is coupled with open reception centers, but also with geographical restrictions to migrants and asylum seekers, who are forbidden to continue their journeys to the mainland unless this is lifted. When adhering to the 1951 Refugee Convention, Greece presented a number of restrictions to its articles, most of which were removed during the 1990s'. However, it retained to this day its restriction to Article 26 (freedom of movement), which allows for the prohibition of asylum seekers and refugees to leave a designated area, in line with containment practices explored by Tazzioli and Garelli (2020).

The arrival of over 850,000 persons to the Aegean islands, far exceeding the approximately 5,000 land arrivals, marked 2015 (UNHCR, 2019). Amidst an exceptional number of arrivals, several policy changes were introduced, some aiming at decarceration, such as the creation of more open reception facilities (CPT/Inf (2016) 4). While administrative detention of migrants in police stations never ceased, that year the committee noted that:

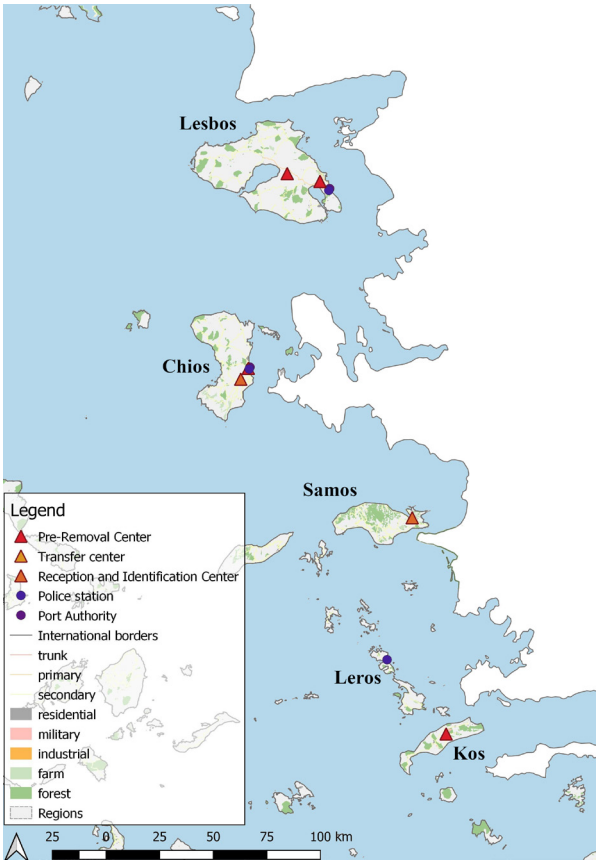
> As a consequence of this change of policy, the number of persons held in the pre-departure centres has been reduced dramatically. (…) Nevertheless, another 2,000 irregular migrants were being held in police stations and special holding facilities around the country for a nominal capacity of little more than 5,500. (CPT/Inf (2016) 4, p. 65)

Island arrivals had been observed at least since the mid-2000s, but islands had not yet concentrated detention infrastructure. Up to this point it was still common for migrants landing in Greek islands to continue their journeys towards Athens and beyond, something that would change with the EU 'Hotspot' approach (Tazzioli, Garelli, 2020).

Detention facilities were observed in the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Kos, and Samos, whose local economies were severely impacted by the increase in arrivals and installation of 'Hotspots' (Ivanov, Stavrinoudis, 2018). In 2015, local communities awed the world with their displays of solidarity (Schoenbauer, 2016). But while hostility towards migrants and asylum seekers was also there, some years on, the strain on these communities seems to have led to its growth (Higginbottom, 2020). Islanders mobilized in attempts to have detention centers removed and strived to influence decisions about what infrastructure their communities would receive (Euronews, 2020; The Associated Press, 2020). Meanwhile, this changing dynamics in the Mediterranean over the last

few years involves not only affected (island) communities, but also the sea and its multitude of commercial and state vessels, fishermen, activists, non-state actors, smugglers and others (Stierl, 2021).

Figure 4 - Spaces where the CPT has observed administrative detention of migrants in the Aegean islands. Source: own elaboration based on georefencing of sites described in CPT reports (1993-2018)



The inauguration of Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) in Aegean islands, was a relatively new addition to Greece's migration management and detention infrastructure (figure 4). While their purpose is not long-term administrative detention of migrants, the length of detention can vary and be converted to pre-removal detention in case-by-case evaluations (Law 4375/2016, 2016). After the closure of the North Macedonian border, and the announcement of the EU-Turkey joint declaration, in March 2016, RICs effectively operated as closed facilities:

> Initially, four of the five 'hotspots' were operated as open reception centres. Once fully operational, refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants were generally processed swiftly, and usually did not stay for more than a few days before they continued their journey to mainland Greece. However, as from 20 March 2016, the Greek authorities transformed all existing 'hotspots' into closed detention facilities and all new arrivals were effectively deprived of their liberty. (CPT/Inf (2017) 25, p. 11)

Nevertheless, this new approach also seems to be characterized by some flexibility allowing RICs to operate as traditional detention centers, depending on context or on an *ad hoc* evaluation of a combination of nationality, gender, age, and "low/high refugee recognition rates":

> (…) adults deprived of their liberty in the closed Section B of the Moria Centre – mostly Pakistanis – were de facto held in pre-removal detention, although the section was not officially operating as a pre-removal centre. (CPT/Inf (2017) 25, p. 17)

The only facility of this type observed on the mainland is located in Fylakio, but its operation is significantly different from the island RICs: Fylakio's was inserted in a local network of detention infrastructure, with which it became intertwined and came to occupy one stage in a long process of mobility through detention spaces (CPT/Inf (2019) 4).

4. Discussion

This study explored the development of the immigration detention landscape in Greece over 25 years (1993-2018), using data from reports made by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) in its visits to Greece. The analysis focused on multiple spaces where the administrative detention of migrants was observed. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to reconstruct the expansion of the infrastructure used for administrative detention of migrants in a country over the years.

Administrative detention of migrants is generally understood as a process intrinsically connected to detection, deportation, and exclusion (Mountz *et al*., 2013), assuming that, if deportations expand, so must detention. Our results suggest several configurations of the detention-deportation nexus. In the Greek case, increase in deportations during the 1990s is associated to the first specialized detention centers, but the same process does not fully explain the accelerated expansion of facilities during the 2000s, when new arrivals decrease, but detention facilities expand. By then, the Greek state faces new obstacles in executing deportations for a variety of reasons, including a lack of bilateral agreements with countries of origin, or of readmission agreements with transit countries. In that context, we can hypothesize that detention infrastructure expands not because there are more deportations, but because there are fewer – resulting in longer detention periods. The CPT testifies, also, to what it names 'informal' deportation practices, and to *ad hoc* detention spaces.

With the remarkable events of 2015, changes in policy altered the detention-deportation nexus once more, strengthening a function of screening, where detention spaces carry out the task of sorting who, among the 'detainable', become 'deportable'. If initially all new arrivals are subject to detention, deportation is one possible outcome, among other possibilities such as refugee status recognition or family reunification. Within facilities, new roles led to reorganization and complexification.

Thus, detention spaces start as infrastructure supporting deportation logistics; become spaces of incapacitation when deportations become harder, with migrants spending months deprived of their liberty; and later operate also as spaces of triage, indicating changes in the detention-deportation nexus that do not always need a change in law or policy to occur, and can be the product of applying the same or similar legal framework to different realities in changing contexts.

According to the Global Detention Project, in 2018 approximately 31,000 migrants were deprived of their freedom in Greece (Global Detention Project, 2019). In part, the consolidation of this system can be explained because Greece first developed domestic migration management instruments when other countries in Europe and beyond had already constructed a restrictive migration paradigm (Gil, 2006; Helbling, Kalkum, 2018). But if it acquired this configuration in Greece, it was due to political choices and particularities of its historical process, not to intrinsic migration management needs.

As with any study, this has important limitations. The reports used have a narrative structure that does not include systematic data about each facility, such as inauguration year, official capacity, and number of detainees. The facilities visited each year are a sample of all existing detention spaces, and therefore the descriptions are not exhaustive. But while this source is not ideal, it allows for a decades-long analysis of detention, including the multiple spaces where it occurs and with considerable detail into its evolution over the years. It allows us to follow the consolidation of a landscape of immigration detention since the first specialized facility was inaugurated and just two years after the first migration law was enacted in the country.

The processes described here are part of a larger, international trend that favours restrictive migration policies and legitimizes immigration detention (Flynn, 2014). But while Greece is not an isolated case, the specifics of how the immigration detention regime develops and consolidates in a country matters, as does understanding to which specific issues detention aimed at offering a solution, and in which spatial tactics it relied to expand. Those topics are particularly important in a context where mass incarceration, both in the immigration control system and in the criminal justice system, was identified as a global trend, becoming a generic solution for social and economic problems it cannot solve (Loyd, Mitchelson, Burridge, 2012).

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