



INSTITUTO
UNIVERSITÁRIO
DE LISBOA

NARRATIVES OF HUMANITARIAN WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS ABOUT REFUGEE CAMP IN LESVOS

Débora Batista Silva dos Santos de Sousa Silva

Master in Humanitarian Action

Supervisor:

PhD. Joana Azevedo, Associate Professor
ISCTE, University Institute of Lisbon

Co-Supervisor:

PhD. Dora Marina Rebelo, Invited Assistant Professor
ISCTE, University Institute of Lisbon

October, 2025

iscte

SOCIOLOGIA
E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS

iscte

BUSINESS
SCHOOL

**NARRATIVES OF HUMANITARIAN WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS ABOUT REFUGEE
CAMP IN LESVOS**

Débora Batista Silva dos Santos de Sousa Silva

Master in Humanitarian Action

Supervisor:

PhD. Joana Azevedo, Associate Professor
ISCTE, University Institute of Lisbon

Co-Supervisor:

PhD. Dora Marina Rebelo, Invited Assistant Professor
ISCTE, University Institute of Lisbon

October, 2025

“My work belongs to the people who have no voice”

Ai Weiwei

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to everyone who supported, encouraged, and stood by me throughout this process, which was sometimes painful, but always wonderful. You are part of this work and part of my life.

I am grateful to God, who empowered me throughout the process and reminded me that I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

My special thanks go to my supervisors, Joana Azevedo and Dora Rebelo, for encouraging me not to give up during this long period. More than that, they always had words of support and encouragement that were decisive for the completion of this research and helped me to value this work. I am grateful for the knowledge and expertise they showed, helping me grow as a student and researcher, and guided me with on this beautiful journey of research.

To Eurorelief, who accepted me as a volunteer and allowed me to carry out my research, providing all the necessary support. I am grateful to all the volunteers and coordinators who allowed me to get to know the field and the residents in a deep and respectful way. Special thanks to the participants who were part of this research and who were willing to share their knowledge, experiences, and the dedication and work they do daily in the field.

With love, I thank my family for being my support and encouragement during the most difficult and challenging moments of this process. A special thanks to my dear husband, who supported me and hugged me when things got tough, as well as for his technical expertise. To my mom, for always having a word of love and care during this process, always reminding me of the importance of sacrifice. To my dad and brother, for encouraging me not to give up.

Finally, I thank my friends who cared for me with sincere words of love, support, and friendship—a special thanks to Guida, Sara, Inês, and Andreia.

Thank you for everything.

Resumo

Milhares de pessoas que fogem dos seus países de origem até solo europeu, com expectativa de encontrarem segurança e proteção, acabam, muitas vezes, em locais que não correspondem às suas expectativas - em campos de refugiados. Estes locais nem sempre garantem as melhores condições de vida para quem neles habita, tendo como objetivo esta investigação entender quais são as condições do campo de refugiados e de que forma impactam a vida de quem neles habitam. Para permitir este estudo, foram realizadas 22 entrevistas semiestruturadas com voluntários e trabalhadores humanitários que trabalham dentro do campo de refugiados de Lesvos, campo de Mavrovouni, tendo alguns deles tido experiência de trabalho de campo também em Moria (antigo campo na ilha de Lesvos). A investigação foi complementada com trabalho de campo realizado pela investigadora, dentro do campo de refugiados como voluntária. Os resultados destacam alterações das condições de vida no campo de refugiados de Mavrovouni, em relação às condições de vida do campo de refugiados de Moria, com melhorias a nível de educação, localização centrada, serviços de limpeza e diminuição de pessoas em campo. Por outro lado, há problemas que se mantêm desde o campo de Moria, como as questões da falta de sentimento de segurança, limite de acesso a eletricidade, tempo de permanência prolongado, incerteza sobre futuro associado ao processo de asilo e degradação da saúde psicológica. O futuro reservado para os campos na ilha grega é questionado, sendo feita reflexão sobre a problemática de continuação de existência de campos de refugiados, mesmo sendo possível existirem melhorias.

Palavras-chave: refugiados, requerentes de asilo, campos de refugiados, qualidade de vida, Lesvos, profissionais humanitários.

Abstract

Thousands of people who flee their countries of origin to European soil, hoping to find safety and protection, often end up in places that do not meet their expectations—in refugee camps. These places do not always guarantee the best living conditions for those who live there. The aim of this research is to understand the conditions in refugee camps how they disrupt the lives of those who live in them. To enable this study, 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted with volunteers and humanitarian workers working within the Lesvos refugee camp, Mavrovouni camp, some of whom also had field experience in Moria (a former camp on the island of Lesvos). The research was complemented by fieldwork carried out by the researcher within the refugee camp as a volunteer. The results highlight changes in living conditions in the Mavrovouni refugee camp compared to those in the Moria refugee camp, with improvements in education, central location, cleaning services, and a decrease in the number of people in the camp. On the other hand, there are problems that remain from the Moria camp, such as issues of lack of security, limited access to electricity, prolonged stays, uncertainty about the future associated with the asylum process, and deterioration of psychological health. The future of the camps on the Greek island is being questioned, with reflection on the issue of the continued existence of refugee camps, even though improvements are possible.

Keywords: refugees, asylum seekers, refugee camps, quality of life, Lesvos, humanitarian workers.

Index

Acknowledgement.....	iii
Resumo.....	v
Abstract	vii
Index of Table, Graphs and Figures	xi
Glossary of acronyms	xiii
My Motivation.....	1
Introduction.....	3
CHAPTER 1 Theoretical framework	5
1.1 Fundamental concepts	5
1.2 Refugee and asylum seeker “crisis” in Europe	8
1.3 Humanitarianism in the context of refugee camps	10
1.3.1 Refugee-led initiatives	11
1.4 Refugee camps in Greece	11
1.5 Context and living conditions in refugee camps on the island of Lesbos	14
CHAPTER 2 Methodology	17
2.1 Data Collection	17
2.2 Limitations	21
CHAPTER 3 Results.....	23
3.1 Results	23
3.2 Discussion of Results	52
Conclusion	59
Bibliography.....	63
Sitography	66
Attachments	69
Attachment A. Interview script.....	70
Attachment B. Informed Consent	73
Attachment C. RIC Mavrovouni Refugee Camp Map.....	74
Attachment D. Housing structure, RHU in Blue Zone and Red Zone.....	75
Attachment E. Housing structure, ISObox in Blue Zone	76
Attachment F. Housing structure, RubbHalls in Yellow Zone	77
Attachment G. Overview of the Mavrovouni refugee camp	78
Attachment H. Fieldwork in with Diapers and Free Hygiene Shop.....	79

Index of Table, Graphs and Figures

Table 2.1 Ethnographic Data of Participants	18
Graph 3.1.1 Assessment of the structure and organization of the Mavrovouni refugee camp	24
Graph 3.1.2 Assessment of the location of the Mavrovouni refugee camp	24
Graph 3.1.3 Assessment of the quantity of food the Mavrovouni refugee camp	28
Graph 3.1.4 Assessment of the quality of food in the Mavrovouni refugee camp	28
Graph 3.1.5 Assessment of access of refugees to medical services in the Mavrovouni refugee camp	31
Graph 3.1.7 Assessment of how people feel safe inside the Mavrovouni refugee camp 1	36
Figure 3.1.6 Reference to the main emotions and symptoms refugee show inside the Mavrovouni refugee camp	33

Glossary of acronyms

BRF - Boat Refugee Foundation

CEAS - Common European Asylum System

EASO - European Asylum Support Office

EODY - Hellenic National Public Health Organization

EU - European Union

FRONTEX - European Border and Coast Guard Agency

ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross

IDPs - Internally Displaced Persons

MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières

NPAM - New Pact on Asylum and Migration

POCS - persons of concern

PTSD - Post-traumatic stress disorder

RHU - Refugee Housing Unit

UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN - United Nations

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

My Motivation

I conducted this case study to learn more about the living conditions in refugee camps because I had previously worked with asylum seekers and refugees in Portugal, but in the context of a Temporary Reception Center. Many of the people I worked with mentioned passing through European refugee camps, especially in Greece and Italy, during their migration journey. They described how this experience affected them in different ways, which sparked my interest in learning more about living conditions in refugee camps. I noticed a consensus in their accounts that, in addition to fleeing their country of origin and experiencing trauma, they ended up in refugee camps that exacerbated their unstable and traumatic condition due to the circumstances in which they had to live. While studying for my postgraduate degree in Humanitarian Action, my interest in refugee camps and their dynamics was further awakened. Finally, the Master's Degree in Humanitarian Action program, combined with the opportunity to intern and volunteer in a refugee camp, allowed me to collect information for my research simultaneously. This sparked my desire to understand how these places work, what their conditions are like, and whether there are prospects for improvement.

Introduction

The year 2015 marked the beginning of the so-called "refugee crisis" in Europe, with thousands of people arriving to seek asylum. The main reasons for fleeing their countries of origin and traveling to Europe were persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations (UNHCR, n.d.a). However, this crisis has not had the same impact across Europe. Greece, for example, has become one of the most overwhelmed spots (Human Rights Watch, 2016), with refugee camps being developed and created there. These camps have become a prolonged reality, and several reports have emerged about the poor living conditions faced by refugees, severely criticizing the infrastructure, overcrowding, and lack of comfort (Feldman, 2014; Moreira et al., 2020). Thus, literature has described refugee camps as long-term, undignified places (Moreira et al., 2020; Alshoubaki, 2017). This research aims to complement existing literature on these spaces and contribute to debates questioning the existence of refugee camps, considering the adverse effects they have on residents, for example in terms of physical and mental health, situations of violence, and the development of hostility with local communities (Harrell-Bond, 1998; Agier, 2016).

The purpose of this research is threefold: first, to explore the conditions and quality of life of refugees living in the Lesvos¹ refugee camp from the perspective of humanitarian workers and volunteers; second, to analyze how these conditions affect the lives of those who live there; and third, to examine the improvements and evolution of living conditions in the camps on the island of Lesvos, the reasons behind them, and the deficiencies that still prevail in each camp. The research asks whether fields should be maintained. The following dissertation is composed of different sections, first, it explores the motivation behind the study; then, it explores existing literature on fundamental concepts associated with refugees, the European "refugee crisis," humanitarianism in the context of refugee camps and the context of refugee camps in Greece, specifically on the island of Lesvos; then, it presents the methodology applied to the research, including the method of data collection and analysis, as well as the limitations; finally, it presents the results, providing an overview of the themes and conclusions that emerged from the data.

The research aims to answer the following questions: What are the living conditions in the Lesvos refugee camp, and how do these conditions affect the residents' quality of life? Even if improvements

¹"An explanation about Lesvos and Lesbos: The island's name is spelt with a Greek "B" or "beta" which is pronounced in Greek as a "V". Both Lesvos and Lesbos are used in English writings and are used interchangeably for the same island" (Zamanian, 2019).

are made, should these spaces, refugee camps, exist? To address these questions, the research has three interconnected objectives: understanding the conditions and quality of life in the Mavrovouni camp, analyzing the improvements between the Moria and Mavrovouni camps, and understanding the prospects for the camps.

This exploratory, qualitative research study collected data through 22 semi-structured interviews, with open- and closed-ended questions, sociodemographic questionnaires, participant observation, and photographic analysis. The research was conducted over three months of fieldwork as an active volunteer in the Lesvos refugee camp. An Applied Thematic Analysis of the data was conducted using MAXQDA24 software. Five main themes emerged from the investigation: 1) Living conditions in the Mavrovouni camp are inhumane (with details on the camp's structure, organization, and services, as well as the issue of physical and mental health); 2) NGOs play a key role in providing services inside and outside the Lesvos refugee camp (including the services and relationships they provide within the camp and their collaboration with the Greek government); 3) Life in the Lesvos refugee camp promotes feelings of insecurity (with situations of violence, theft, and sexual abuse; the role of communities in the camp; the relationship with police authorities; and restrictions on movement); 4) A prolonged stay in the Lesvos refugee camp creates uncertainty (associated with uncertainty about the future, a lack of control and decision-making abilities, dependence on others, and delays in the asylum process); and 5) Fewer people in the Lesvos refugee camp lead to better living conditions (as compared to the Moria camp).

CHAPTER 1

Theoretical framework

1.1 Fundamental concepts

Exploring and reviewing existing literature is an important element of any research project, providing an overview of existing knowledge on a specific topic. It is not only relevant and important to be aware of the central themes that will be addressed, but also undeniably necessary to define and clarify the concepts themselves, and to clarify what they do not define and should not be associated with. What differentiates refugees, asylum seekers and migrants?

To make a clearer and more objective distinction between these concepts, broadly speaking, the main difference between a migrant and a refugee or asylum seeker is the reason to leave. Migrants are mainly motivated by the search for better living conditions and prospects, particularly economic ones, when leaving their country. Refugees and asylum seekers, on the other hand, are primarily motivated by the need to preserve and guarantee their own lives and safety, thus fleeing persecution and/or violence. The most important distinction, however, is that international law treats refugees and migrants differently. This legal distinction is based on the difference between voluntary and involuntary displacement (Loescher, 2021, p. 39). The primary and universal definition of a refugee that applies to States is contained in Article 1(A)(2) of the 1951 Convention, as amended by its 1967 Protocol, defining a refugee as someone who:

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (UNHCR, n.d.c).

The concept of refugees may sound new to us, but it is not. Throughout human history, there has been persecution and forced displacement from countries of origin. During the two World Wars, for example, many people fled in search of safety. However, this displacement — and the subsequent reception by certain countries — wasn't regulated at all. Consequently, the United Nations (UN) was established in 1945, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was drafted in 1948. Thus, all individuals, without exception, must be guaranteed the rights set forth in the UDHR, with particular regard to Article 14 (United Nations, n.d.a):

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Therefore, it is imperative that we focus our attention on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), since refugee displacement is often caused by human rights violations. Following World War II, global concern about refugees increased, leading to the creation of the UNHCR in 1950. This agency applied the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees, which sets out how refugees who have been forced to leave their country as a result of persecution, violent conflicts, and serious human rights violations should be treated. To allow for the expansion of concepts, the 1967 Protocol was created and applied worldwide without reference to geographical or temporal limits. More recently, the Syrian conflict has brought this issue to the forefront of the global agenda (Malpique, 2018) and much has been said and written about the concept of refugees. Nevertheless, the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol remain the primary mechanisms that frame, regulate and define refugee rights and duties. To clarify, a migrant is defined as someone who lives a

The process of crossing an international border or a state border. It is a population movement that includes any movement of people, independently of its extent, composition, or causes; it includes the migration of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted persons, and economic migrants³ (OIM, 2009, p.40).

Unlike asylum seekers, immigrants do not come from a context of war, conflict or persecution, nor are they in a life-threatening situation (Santinho, 2011). Asylum seekers, however, are individuals who are seeking international protection but have not yet been granted refugee status (Loescher, 2021). The concepts of refugees and asylum seekers are often associated with international migration, understood as “Movements of people who leave their country of origin or habitual residence to settle, permanently or temporarily, in another country. Consequently, it involves crossing international borders” (OIM, 2009, p.42)⁴, including forced migration movements, where refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are included (Loescher, 2021). The many debates on the categories explored here have resulted in the need to differentiate between 'migrants' and 'refugees', a distinction that has even become a political issue in the European context (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018),

There are few more challenging questions for academics and policy-makers alike than where, and how, we draw the line between ‘forced’ and ‘voluntary’ migration (Richmond 1993; Zetter 2007; Betts 2013; Long 2013). The positioning of this line, and the factors, places, and experiences which come to be associated with the categories that lie either side, shape our understanding of who constitutes a ‘refugee’ on the one hand, and ‘migrant’ on the other (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018, p. 50)

³ Free translation by the author. In the original “*Processo de atravessamento de uma fronteira internacional ou de um Estado. É um movimento populacional que compreende qualquer deslocação de pessoas, independentemente da extensão, da composição ou das causas; inclui a migração de refugiados, pessoas deslocadas, pessoas desenraizadas e migrantes económicos*” (OIM, 2009, p.40).

⁴ Free translation by the author. In the original “*Movimentos de pessoas que deixam os seus países de origem ou de residência habitual para se fixarem, permanente ou temporariamente, noutra país. Consequentemente, implica a transposição de fronteiras internacionais*” (OIM, 2009, p.42).

Despite attempts to define and differentiate between these concepts in an objective and clear way, more researchers have questioned the extent to which such distinctions are possible. They have argued for a move beyond opposing binaries and have emphasized the need for a “better understanding of the ambiguous and contested nature of the category of refugee and its related category of immigrant and to place contemporary human mobilities in historical and geographic contexts” (Castañeda et. al., 2016, p.2). The truth is that constructing categories can oversimplify the associated experiences (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018), raising several reflections on the workings and meanings attributed to existing and created borders, since they sometimes legitimize claims that justify policies of exclusion and containment (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018, p.48), and in this sense

Régis Debray was seeking to relaunch public debate on the subject of borders, as if the scales had swung too far in one direction, that of a global village without borders; as if, in return, a frightful illusion was born from this collective belief in a world that had already come to form a limitless whole, open to the void; and as if, finally, this fear explained the construction of immense walls and new barriers with the object of identity protection (Agier, 2016, p.15).

After all, “Borders are socially 'constructed’” (Agier, 2016, p.33), as is mobility (Aradau, 2016), i.e., mobility involves displacement—the act of moving between places—with meanings in a social and cultural context, in time and space (Cresswell, 2006; Cantat, 2018). The concept of mobility is also associated with the concept of belonging, which explores how social, political, and legal systems exclude or include people (Castañeda et. al., 2016), where social categorization becomes very aggressive in their experience in host communities, because “Refugees often bear the consequences of the categorical violence that arises from labeling them illegal aliens, undocumented immigrants, or sans papiers (Phyllis Pease Chock)” (Castañeda et. al., 2016, p.4). As Crawley & Skleparis (2018) reflect, the use of the categories “migrant” and “refugee” serves to differentiate the experiences of those who move and how the legitimacy, or not, of their claims for international protection are viewed, despite their sources being at opposite ends of the political spectrum, not least because the category of “refugee” is constantly being transformed in response to changing alliances or political interests on the part of the countries receiving refugees. For this reason, this differentiation is not always straightforward or neutral. This is partly because the same person may fall into different categories simultaneously (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). Thus, the entire categorization dynamic may fail to provide security for those in vulnerable situations since categories perpetuate and reinforce the dichotomy used to distinguish, divide, and discriminate against migrants (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018), with UNHCR now uses the term “persons of concern” (PoCs) - “persons of concern as an umbrella term and divide persons they consider to be of concern into different groups. This includes refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returned refugees, returned IDPs, stateless persons and others of concern” (UNHCRc, 2017, citado por Løvåsen, 2017, p.13).

1.2 Refugee and asylum seeker “crisis” in Europe

During the refugee “crisis” in 2015 there were more than 52 million refugees and displaced persons worldwide (Zarro, 2017), the highest number ever recorded. In 2021, around 89.3 million people worldwide were forced to leave their homes, of whom 27.1 million were refugees (UNHCR, 2022).

In his work, Siegel (2021) explores the issue of the refugee "crisis" that the contemporary world has been experiencing. Despite there being little consensus on the essence of this concept, it sometimes brings more confusion than clarity “Defining a situation as a ‘crisis’ is an efficient strategy for demanding a solution”. The term is used as a synonym for conflict and instability, with various associated meanings. It is characterized not as an isolated, temporary moment, but as an extensive and prolonged state of affairs that has become the norm. This makes it possible to relate the large refugee "crisis" to refugee camps, where the arrival of refugees on the island was presented as a historic event and an urgent problem to be solved. This gave rise to the concept of the refugee "crisis" in the Greek context — a humanitarian and political crisis (Siegel, 2021). There are thousands of refugees who leave their countries and, in such desperation, subject themselves to land and sea routes in the most precarious and inhumane conditions imaginable. Countless people have died in the Mediterranean, and countless more are living in overcrowded refugee camps. More and more countries are closing their borders and suspending the Schengen area. (InfoMigrants, 2021). This contributes to the growth of criminal networks, which seemingly make life easier for refugees by providing transport, documentation and accommodation for extremely high fees. According to an Amnesty Internacional (2014) and Panebianco (2016), in 2013, Europe and the international community were shocked by the sinking of refugee boats off Lampedusa, prompting the Italian government to launch Operation Mare Nostrum to search for and rescue migrants. However, this operation became politically and economically unsustainable, and in 2014, the Italian government replaced it with Operation Triton, coordinated by European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). However, while Operation Mare Nostrum was created to carry out search and rescue activities (Italy had already rescued tens of thousands of lives at sea, migrants and refugees), Triton was a mission whose main objective was deterrence and border control, not rescue.

By 2015, more than 1 million people had arrived in search of protection and security that their countries of origin did not guarantee. In fact, since 2015, by the end of 2020, more than 65,000 vulnerable refugees have found protection in Europe thanks to the European Union (EU) resettlement programs (European Commission, 2019). Indeed, European states have been faced with “a series of political, economic, social, and cultural challenges, seeking precisely a common position (a common

response) to maximize the effectiveness of reception policies” (Costa & Teles, 2017, p.30)⁵, and in such a way as to prevent certain states from being overwhelmed with all the charges. The route across the Mediterranean Sea or the Balkan route are the ways that thousands of people have used to reach European soil, however, there has been an increase in the number and diversity of migration routes used by refugees,

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) identified eight routes in 2017: West Africa; Western Mediterranean; Central Mediterranean; Apulia and Calabria; Western Balkans; Eastern Mediterranean; Eastern borders; and the circular route from Albania to Greece (Costa & Teles, 2017, p.32)⁶.

This agency – Frontex – supports EU countries and Schengen associated countries in managing their external borders, as does the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), which plays a key role in the practical implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and “Aims to strengthen practical cooperation on asylum and assist Member States in fulfilling their obligation, at European and international level, to provide protection to affected populations” (SEF/GEPEF, 2019, p.59)⁷. A fundamental principle underlying the 1951 Convention is the necessity of international cooperation and the distribution of responsibilities concerning the reception of refugees. However, this principle is not always observed, as the host state may be unable or unwilling to effectively protect basic human rights (Janmyr, 2012).

It was the photograph of Aylan Kurdi, a Syrian child who died drowned in the Mediterranean and was found on Turkish beaches on September 2, 2015, that became a symbol of the huge refugee “crisis”. During the summer months of 2015, the whole world became aware of what was happening in the Mediterranean, and an ever-increasing flow of refugees and asylum seekers was heading towards southern Europe. In the following months, the “crisis” dominated the political agenda in Europe and the media worldwide, not least because media coverage and visibility are important factors in capturing public attention and mobilizing international action (Barnett & Weiss, 2008). Thus, the largest flow arrived at popular European hot spots, refugee camps, one of which was the Greek island of Lesbos.

⁵ Free translation by the author. In the original *“uma série de desafios, de ordem política, económica, social e cultural, procurado, precisamente, um posicionamento comum (uma resposta conjunta) para maximizar a eficácia das políticas de acolhimento”* (Costa & Teles, 2017, p.30).

⁶ Free translation by the author. In the original *“tendo a Agência Europeia da Guarda de Fronteiras e Costeira (Frontex) identificado em 2017 oito rotas: África Ocidental; Mediterrâneo Ocidental; Mediterrâneo Central; Apúlio e Calábria; Balcãs Ocidentais; Mediterrâneo Oriental; fronteiras orientais e o percurso circular da Albânia para a Grécia”* (Costa & Teles, 2017, p.32).

⁷ Free translation by the author. In the original *“Visa reforçar a cooperação prática em matéria de asilo e auxiliar os Estados-membros no cumprimento da sua obrigação, a nível europeu e internacional, de conceder proteção às populações afetadas”* (SEF/GEPEF, 2019, p.59).

1.3 Humanitarianism in the context of refugee camps

A clear set of basic rights protects refugees through international refugee law, human rights law, and humanitarian law. These rights protect refugees from violence, inhumane treatment, and involuntary recruitment (Janmyr, 2012, p.14). According to Global Humanitarian Assistance (2017) humanitarian aid is intended to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain Human dignity during and after a man-made crisis or natural disaster. Humanitarian action intervenes in situations of natural disasters, conflicts, wars, persecutions, human rights violations, and pandemics. In fact, faced with affected populations, humanitarian action covers protection and assistance (of goods and services for physical as well as psychosocial needs), conflict resolution and risk reduction. The objective will always be to save human lives. In 1864, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was created, and international humanitarian law emerged, with humanitarianism being defined by seven principles “humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality” (Barnett & Weiss, 2008, p.3). Regarding protection, we can refer to the dimensions of protection in relation to the protection of life and physical integrity, legal protection (of rights), and protection in contexts of conflict (emergency). In fact, people who are refugees or asylum seekers have been given protection in the international sphere, and this is because

Each State is responsible for ensuring that the rights of its citizens are respected. The need for international protection therefore only arises when this national protection is denied or is otherwise unavailable. At that point, the primary responsibility for providing international protection lies with the country in which the individual has sought asylum. All States have a general duty to provide international protection as a result of obligations based on international law, including international human rights law and customary international law. States that are parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and/or its 1967 Protocol have obligations in accordance with the provisions of these instruments (UNHCR, 2005).

In the context of camps, NGO workers, human rights activists, and volunteers have played a key role in providing food, medical care, and legal support - “Aid workers and private citizen initiatives have become part of the community and should be considered and included when managing the crisis and planning on how to further manage the crisis” (Løvåsen, 2017, p.25).

As in many other crises, the Greek situation initially relied on spontaneous solidarity initiatives by citizens, as well as local NGOs and their volunteers, who came up with responses. NGOs expanded their support and provided responses where the government lacked the capacity to do so (Gaglias, 2016, cited by Løvåsen, 2017). In fact, humanitarian aid programs are temporary, where humanitarian professionals “should be the opportunity for the host government to strengthen its capacity to manage its own programme after the humanitarians leave” (Harrell-Bond, 1986, p.67).

1.3.1 Refugee-led initiatives

According to Harrell-Bond (1986, p. 250), we can group the main disabilities experienced by refugees into three categories: powerlessness in the face of a foreign social and economic environment, physical and psychological issues associated with this, and the loss of all their belongings. Therefore, it is important to consider how refugee communities rebuild themselves and what economic strategies they can employ to survive without humanitarian aid.

The work of humanitarian organizations draws attention to those who suffer (Harrell-Bond, 1986), “The terrain on which humanitarians walk is nourished by the forces of destruction, production, and salvation” (Barnett & Weiss, 2008, p.15), where in the last few years we have seen an increase in the scope, scale, and significance of humanitarian action. Refugees are not just a humanitarian issue, as they intersect with several areas (such as politics, human rights, and reconstruction) (Betts e Collier, 2017), and that although they are not just a matter for NGOs (Betts and Collier, 2017, p.209), it is they who provide many of the answers to this population, not always with professionals or with adequate training in humanitarian action.

1.4 Refugee camps in Greece

In times of crisis, when a large number of refugees seek asylum, their new lives are often confined to camps. This situation is far from ideal, yet it is a reality for many. For many, living in a camp is synonymous with living in a state of crisis—an existential crisis—where the duration of their stay and their future are uncertain. Although there is no clear, official definition of a refugee camp, it can be described as

a variety of camps or camp-like settings – temporary settlements including planned or self-settled camps, collective centres and transit and return centres established for hosting displaced persons. It applies to ongoing and new situations where due to conflict or natural disasters, displaced persons are compelled to find shelter in temporary places (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2008, p.14).

Thus, according to Janmyr (2012), the basic elements that identify a refugee camp can be identified as: the requirement that the camp's population be refugees or displaced persons; that they be spaces that operate with restrictions on freedom of movement and a certain mode of governance and power; and that they be civil and humanitarian in nature. What Betts and Collier (2017, p.59) argue is that after the Cold War “Northern donor states began to view refugee camps as a means to contain refugee populations who otherwise might try to turn up at their borders”, where the idea that camps have often been selected to isolate refugees from the local community has expanded among several authors, as has the idea that camps are no longer “temporary,” where they would be a space to provide an emergency response (Betts e Collier, 2017) to become lasting responses (Løvåsen, 2017), “virtual cities”. As Ramadan (2013, p.65) cited by Jahre et al. (2018, p.324) mentions, “Camps have, for several

decades, been recognized as “temporary space[s] in which refugees may receive humanitarian relief and protection until a durable solution can be found to their situation”. Based on the testimonies of various entities, residents, and organizations regarding refugee camps around the world, deteriorating living conditions are common to almost all of them. It is no surprise that people describe the conditions as inhumane, citing well-defined physical characteristics and extreme security measures “The proliferation of fences, walls and enclosures has become a key feature of global bordering practices, a spectacle of sovereign protection and impotence at the same time” (Brown 2010 cited by Aradau, 2016, p.569). These conditions affect many areas of the lives of the residents who live there, but especially in relation to mental health, where people arrive in the camp already in a state of trauma, and this state is intensified by prolonged living in the camp and the limitation of freedom of movement that refuse them from living fully

Life in camps adversely affects the mental health of already traumatised people and inhabitants frequently exhibit despair and helplessness at their long-term prospects and the combination of confinement and dependency encouraging them to abandon social responsibilities (Clark ,1985, citado por Harrell-Bond, 1998, p.23).

If it is true that camps save lives in the emergency phase, it is also true that, as the years go by, they progressively waste these same lives. A refugee may be able to receive assistance, but is prevented from enjoying those rights – for example, to freedom of movement, employment, and in some cases, education – that would enable him or her to become a productive member of a society (UNHCR, 2004, citado por Løvåsen, 2017, p.15-16).

In short, life in refugee camps becomes prolonged, with no end in sight, creating a feeling of living in limbo (Betts and Collier, 2017), without certainty or stability to build a future.

Reflecting on Greece's situation over the last 20 years, crises, the financial situation, and the reception of refugees come to mind. When Greece joined the EU in the 1980s, its economy appeared strong. In 2008, the Wall Street crash created a global economic crisis, and Greece was one of the countries hit hardest. A year later, Greece's high level of debt was revealed. Three successive financial rescue plans were put into operation in 2010, 2012, and 2015. Through these plans, Greece received €289 billion in loans from the International Monetary Fund, the European Union, and the European Central Bank. From 2010 to 2018, Greece was hit with a one-two punch: austerity and the mass arrival of refugees and asylum seekers following the Balkan route. In the post-Arab Spring era, the war in Syria increased the number of people risking their lives to reach European soil. Greece has received billions in EU and international funding to support displaced individuals, despite widespread criticism of camp conditions.

In 2021, a total of 9,157 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece and in 2022 increased to 18,780 arrivals, being the most common nationalities in recent years Afghanistan, Syrian Arab Republic,

Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Palestine (ordered by main nationalities and number of people associated)⁸. In demographic terms, the trend of recent years continues, with more men than women and children being received. Although the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers on the Greek islands is lower than during the 2015-16 crisis, largely due to the EU-Turkey agreement and the closure of the Greek Macedonian border, they are still a feature of everyday life in Greece.

Jahre, et.al. (2018) explore the three dimensions of refugee camps in their work: time, space, and resources. Thus, regarding the time factor, the supposed idea is that camps are temporary, but what has been observed is that they have become quite permanent places, almost like cities (Pérouse de Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000). In terms of space, it is important to consider the physical aspects of community and view camps as social, cultural, and political spaces. Regarding resources, caution is needed to ensure that refugees are not only seen as recipients of aid but also as active participants in various areas of life. Several refugee camps are located in Greece, with the largest being on the islands of Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Leros, and Kos. Many have lost their lives in these camps due to disease, violence, conflict, and mental health issues that have led them to take their own lives - "The refugee camps represent the core of the problem, as well as being a symbol of it. The refugees live the problem on a daily basis. They relate their misery and life of hardship to the loss of their homes in their original towns and villages" (Amer, 1989, p.149). In short, since 2015 we have seen Europe attempt to present solutions to the refugee "crisis" through the creation of the Relocation Program, designed to support and reduce pressure on countries at the forefront of reception (Italy and Greece), where each member state was required to receive a part of the asylum seekers (European Commission, n.d.).

However, we can see that many states have escaped their responsibilities, which also contributes to the deterioration of conditions in Greece (Human Rights Watch, 2016). The Turkey-EU Agreement was Europe's solution to the refugee "crisis." Turkey promised to contain refugees so they would not reach Europe in exchange for certain requirements. Thus, it is an agreement that prioritizes the protection of states' interests over those in need of protection (Haferlach & Kurban, 2017; Diário de Notícias, 2018). The crisis worsened, and has continued to worsen over the years, and failed solutions have only delayed the inevitable: inhumane conditions in the 'hotspots' – camps and detention centers where people arriving in Greece to seek asylum are "detained for filtering" – characterized by violations of basic living conditions, human rights, health, and safety of the people who are forced to live there.

⁸ European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023; UNHCR, 2017.

1.5 Context and living conditions in refugee camps on the island of Lesbos

The epicenter of this unprecedented crisis is Greece, particularly the Aegean Sea islands, especially Lesbos. Lesbos, the third largest Greek island, is located in the northeastern Aegean Sea., “has a close proximity to the Turkish mainland separated only by a narrow strait, ranging from 6-10 km wide. Its location has made the island an easy first step for refugees and migrants to enter the EU” (Niarchos, 2015a, cited by Løvåsen, 2017, p.6). In recent years, the island of Lesbos has become the main gateway to Europe for many refugees and asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. Since 2015, thousands of people from the Middle East and Africa have arrived on the shores of Italy and Greece seeking refuge. At that time, the island of Lesbos was designated as the focal point for the refugee "crisis," a location where many refugees arrived and stayed. Refugees in the 20th century wanted to stay on the island, but as Voulgaris & Meli (2018) point out, people are now stuck there. The camps on the island of Lesbos, like any other camp, were not designed to be long-term accommodation, but the fact that people are stuck on the island causes several problems that EU policies have not yet been able to respond to. The Moria refugee camp is the first thing that comes to mind when we think of Lesbos “symbol of the ‘refugee crisis’ and the failure of the EU’s migration policy” (Siegel, 2021, p.14). As the numbers increased, a new reality emerged for the island and its residents. This new reality required the involvement of local inhabitants and foreign volunteers to provide basic necessities (Tsangarides, 2015, cited by Løvåsen, 2017). Greek locals began offering food, water, and blankets to those arriving on the island. However, when the number of arrivals increased dramatically, the locals could no longer handle the situation. The crisis was real, and Lesbos quickly became the focus of global media attention. Inside the camp, people of different nationalities fought among themselves (Moreira et al., 2020). Outside the camp, conflicts with the Greek population spiraled out of control. Shops were vandalized and robbed, and violence occurred (Deutsche Welle, 2020; Frydenlund & Diaz, 2018). This generated insecurity and hostility toward those arriving on the island (Open Society Foundations, 2020). The camp residents were hungry and desperate, and the barriers of common sense and respect ceased to exist. While the Greek population had previously been willing to support all new arrivals, they gradually wanted to distance themselves, especially due to the impact on tourism. Tourism was the island's largest source of income, and the impact of the Moria camp was huge, even though it was spatially remote and separated from the local population and all social and commercial services. The island became known as the “refugee island” or “prison island” (Kadhammar, 2017, cited by Løvåsen, 2017). In February 2020, a doctor said, “The suffering is palpable, the hopelessness is insidious, the feeling of abandonment is allconsuming... the situation in Moria is about to implode” (The Guardian, 2020a). The Moria camp was characterized by overcrowding. The situation worsened in early September 2020 when fires broke out and destroyed much of the camp “The refugee camp is home to an estimated

13,000 people, more than six times its maximum capacity of 2,200 people. More than 4,000 children, including 407 unaccompanied minors, live in the camp, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency” (CNN, 2020). The terror of Moria continues as the situation with the pandemic of the novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) arises, “In March, [2020] severe restrictions were imposed on the movement of asylum seekers living in the camps” (Siegel, 2021, p.14), during that period, the idea that the camps and their residents were the source of the virus spread widely (The Guardian, 2020b). During the major refugee “crisis,” the Moria camp was not the only place made available to accommodate people. According to Refugee Support Aegean (2021), the Kara Tepe reception facility was made available by the Municipality of Mytilene in 2015 during the large influx of refugees. The camp can accommodate up to 1,350 people at a time, primarily from vulnerable groups, including families with young children, the elderly, individuals with chronic health conditions or disabilities, and single women. The camp is considered a model due to the living conditions it provides, which include beds, heating, water, and electricity—conditions that guarantee a basic, dignified life. However, on February 25, 2021, Greek Minister of Migration Notis Mitarakis announced the imminent closure of the Kara Tepe camp (LUSA, 2021). The decision to close the refugee camp, which had established good practices, was questioned because it served as an alternative to traditional camps. Panagiotis Mitarachi, the Minister of Migration and Asylum, commented on this issue in interview with CNN (2020) “It is clear that we need a new facility which is safer and offers more humane conditions and offers the appropriate capacity needed,” (...) “The refugees in Moria are not treated as humans” [is a] a “humanitarian catastrophe”. In fact, the complete destruction of Moria seemed to present an opportunity for improvement in the form of a new camp (Siegel, 2021), and “On September 12, the Greek government opened a new migrant camp in Lesbos after Moria was destroyed by fire. The new camp houses around 10,000 people” (InfoMigrants, 2020)⁹, the Moria 2.0 camp is a temporary RIC in Mavrovouni. Through interviews with residents of the new camp, InfoMigrants (2020) learned about the living conditions in the camp: there is no physical distancing or other protection against virus transmission, no showers, and the tents offer little protection against the cold in winter. While there was already a climate of fighting, conflict, and violence in Moria in 2017, the precarious conditions in Mavrovouni continued in 2020 (CNN, 2020), especially because of its location near the water (Siegel, 2021). Both refugees and humanitarian actors have blamed the Greek government for failing to address conditions in the camp. There have been several attempts to address the refugee “crisis” on the island. For example, “23 September 2020, a new attempt to deal with the crisis was announced, namely the draft of the New Pact on Asylum and Migration (NPAM)” (Siegel, 2021, p.14), however, many degrading situations have persisted. For

⁹ Free translation by the author. In the original “*a 12 de Setembro, o governo grego abriu um novo campo de migrantes em Lesbos, depois de Moria ter sido destruída pelo fogo. O novo acampamento alberga cerca de 10.000 pessoas*” (InfoMigrants, 2020).

example, Papanikolaou, a social worker for the Greek Council for Refugees on Lesbos, notes that security issues are still a concern, especially for women (Oxfam, 2021). The camps have been linked to the deterioration of residents' mental health, exacerbating their suffering and trauma. Although European leaders promised there would be no more "Morias," Greece soon built a temporary camp replicating elements of Moria. Raphael Shilhav (Oxfam, 2021) said the Greek government and the EU should address the urgent needs of vulnerable people on the island instead of replicating existing practices in the new Migration Pact. As Pullae Dahal (2015, p. 33) observed in Nepalese refugee camps, the same can be seen in Greek refugee camps "The loss of property, separation from family, and the fear of losing what little was left formed the topic of everyday conversation in most of the camps". Dr. Thagguna observed this in several residents of various refugee camps in Nepal "A large number of them presented with low mood, hopelessness, sleep disturbances, and a high level of anxiety about their future" (Pulla e Dahal, 2015, p.39). On the other hand, as Voulgaris and Meli (2018) mention, it is possible to discuss the future of the camps, improvements that could be made, involvement with the local community, and the government's role in the matter. Despite the fact that many aspects of the conditions at the Mavrovouni camp resemble those at the Moria camp, the question arises: How has the camp changed, and what gradual improvements are emerging?

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

This research aims to explore the conditions in the Lesvos refugee camp and the impact on the quality of life of the people who live there, through the perspectives of humanitarian actors and volunteers working in the refugee camp in Lesvos, Greece. At the time of the research, all participants who were interviewed were working in the camp, and some participants also had experience working in the previous camp, the Moria camp. In particular, it was possible to describe the structure, operation, and dynamics experienced in the camp, the improvements that have been identified, and the obstacles that still face them.

The results presented were based on the analysis of interview data and the researcher's personal observations, composing the main themes that emerged from the data analysis. To explore these issues, according to Bryman (2012), the samples used in qualitative research involve some type of intentional sampling, so that they are selected based on criteria that will allow the research questions to be answered, thus different participants were selected according to the following criteria: they had to be humanitarian workers or volunteers who had been working in the Lesvos refugee camp for at least three months and who could contribute their experience on the subject; as a preferred but not eliminatory criterion, participants who had also worked in the Moria camp in the past were selected.

The goal was to understand the different areas of life within a refugee camp by collecting a wide range of data on the camp's context, housing/infrastructure, food, facilities (such as electricity), health services, education, legal and psychological support. Through the eyes of those who worked within the camp and witnessed its life and dynamics, the objective was to explore the living conditions within the refugee camp, the improvements that have been possible to verify, what has brought about these improvements, and to understand the challenges that still remain for these places in the future. The interviews provided material that created and reinforced the academic conversation about the conditions of the camps and the urban and social future of these spaces.

2.1 Data Collection

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 22 humanitarian actors and volunteers who worked at the Lesvos Refugee Camp – RIC Mavrovouni camp, an NGO, Eurorelief, an international humanitarian organization, with a volunteer base operating within the camp.

In addition to the data collected through interviews, the methodological strategy also included participant observation by the researcher during her internship at the Lesvos refugee camp between March and June 2022, where, in addition to being involved in different areas of work within the camp,

she was also able to be more involved with the Diapers and Free Hygiene Shop department within the camp (see Attachments H). In this investigation, photographic analysis was also used, with photographs taken by the researcher (see Attachments D to H) while in the field, to provide a better description of the conditions and dynamics.

The sociodemographic questionnaire used (see Attachment A) allowed us to ascertain the age, gender, nationality, occupation, occupational role in the Field, and duration of the fieldwork period of the participants.

Table 2.1 Ethnographic Data of Participants

Name	Age	Sex	Nationality	Occupation	Occupational role in the Field	Fieldwork period of participants ¹⁰
Mia	22	F	American	Administrative	Data Office	-July to August 2019 (Moria) -May to July 2021 + January to March 2022 (Mavrovouni)
Kathy	26	F	Canada	Student	Shelter Allocation Coordinator	- 2017 to 2021 (in the form of 3 months in Lesbos, 2 months in Canada) - Constantly since 2021 (Moria & Mavrovouni)
Marsha	18	F	American	Gardener	Program Mothers and toddlers' class	-1 month 2020 (Chios), -February to April 2022 (Mavrovouni)
Marga	23	F	Germany	Social Worker and Pedagogy	Social Care Team (medical side)	-Since November 2021 until now (Mavrovouni)
Candice	26	F	American	Office Worker	Shelter Team and Info Team	- 2 month in 2021 (Mavrovouni) -Since February 2022 until now (Mavrovouni)
Joanne	28	F	Dutch	Teacher of Economics	NFI and Logistic Coordinator	-5 weeks in Summer 2021 (Mavrovouni) -Since December 2021 until now (Mavrovouni)
Jim	24	M	Holand	Forest and Environmental Management Student	Social Care Team	-Since October 2021 until now (Mavrovouni)
Clare	30	F	Canada	Teacher in Community School	Shift Leaders Team	-3 times (the first one during of 1 month, the others times during 3 months; Moria and Mavrovouni) -Since October 2021 until now (Mavrovouni)

¹⁰ The Fieldwork period of participants identified not only for the current camp, Mavrovouni, but also for past experiences, especially if they also worked in the Moria camp.

Annika	25	F	Dutch	Forensic Orthopedagogue	Social Care Team (protection team member)	-3 weeks, 2 time, in 2017 (Moria) -Since January 2022 until now (Mavrovouni)
Sabrina	26	F	French	Professional Photographer	Site Planning and Shelter Operation Officer	-October 2018 to May 2021 (in the form of 2 months in Lesbos, 2 months in French; Moria & Mavrovouni) - Constantly since June 2021 until now (Mavrovouni)
Lucas	30	M	Peruvian	Industrial Engineer and Member of Disaster Response Team	Shift Leaders Team	-Since September 2021 until now (Mavrovouni)
Tessa	20	F	Netherlands	Social Worker	Shelter Team	-December 2020 to June 2021 (Mavrovouni) -July to November 2021 (Samos) -Since January 2022 until now (Mavrovouni)
Joyce	57	F	Dutch	Elementary School Teacher	Program Mothers and toddlers' class	-10 days in 2016 (Moria) -Since July 2020 until now (Moria & Mavrovouni)
Tina	26	F	German	Volunteer	Operations Officer for Logistics and Data Office	-In 2017 (no period information; Moria) -Since 2019 until now (Moria & Mavrovouni)
Nina	22	F	Netherlands	Volunteer	OPS officer (responsible for the shift leaders, maintenance, personnel)	-Since November 2020 until now (Mavrovouni)
Miranda	22	F	Netherlands	Nurse (lung department)	Social Care Team (Medical Coordinator)	-5 weeks in Junho 2021 (Mavrovouni) -Since October 2021 until now (Mavrovouni)
Lisa	31	F	American	Teacher	Education Activities Coordinator	-2 weeks in 2018 (Moria) -Since March 2019 until now (Moria & Mavrovouni)
Sonia	22	F	Dutch	Grocery store worker	Shift Leaders Team	-August to November of 2021 (Mavrovouni) -Since January 2022 until now (Mavrovouni)
Samuel	32	M	Belgium	Volunteer	Translator Care Person	-Since February 2021 until now (Mavrovouni)
Daniel	49	M	American citizen	Charity worker (work with missionary organizations and humanitarian NGOs)	Site Coordinator	-Since September 2019 until now (Moria & Mavrovouni)

Miriam	30	F	Dutch	Volunteer and Photographer	Social Care Team (Coordinator)	-Since June 2021 until now (Mavrouvoni)
Marielle	20	F	Dutch	Volunteer	Shelter Team	-October to December 2020 (Mavrouvoni) -Since October 2021 until now (Mavrouvoni)

Source: Own elaboration, questionnaire Mavrovouni camp 2022

The interview script was based on existing literature and designed to address the research objectives. However, it also allowed participants to discuss topics not initially included but considered important (Moreira et al., 2020). Topics covered during the interview included participants' perceptions of life in the Mavrovouni camp, including its structure, services, dynamics, and quality of life; a comparison between the current camp and the Moria camp; and issues that need improvement in the future. As Diener and Crandall, cited by Bryman (2012), have explored, the application of social research should be guided by four main ethical principles: protection from harm to participants, informed consent, privacy, and honesty. These principles were applied in this research and methodology. Thus, all interviewees were presented with an informed consent form (see attachment B), which all respondents signed, thereby allowing for the confidentiality and anonymity of all interviewees. In order to facilitate transcription and subsequent analysis, permission to record the interviews was also requested. Participants were informed of the research topic and objectives, and confidentiality was ensured by using pseudonyms. The interviews lasted between 35 and 100 minutes. All interviews were conducted in person in Lesvos while the researcher was interning and volunteering at the refugee camp. One advantage of this research design was the ability to conduct interviews in person, combining exploratory fieldwork with work and engagement with the camp's dynamics and responsibilities. At certain points during the interviews, it was easier to understand the interviewees because the researcher was experiencing what they were describing in the camp. This fieldwork provided privileged access to various dynamics within the camp, such as its structure and organization, and existing responses inside and outside the camp. It also allowed the researcher to get to know the participants and residents of the camp. The researcher conducted the interviews in person, which made it possible to observe interesting details about the participants' body language. The researcher's strategy involved starting fieldwork without beginning the interviews simultaneously. When the researcher began fieldwork, the goal was to absorb what the camp conveyed, the dynamics of the refugees, and the living conditions to be explored through this research. The goal was also to understand the roles that different humanitarian actors and volunteers assumed in the camp. This would allow the researcher to select interviewees more comprehensively and richly, for example, selecting people from different areas of intervention in the camp, of different ages, and of different

professional contexts. After meeting potential interviewees, winning their trust, and developing a better understanding of the camp's dynamics and conditions, the researcher began the interviews while continuing the fieldwork. As Walford (2009) explained, researcher rarely took field notes while working in the field and experiencing and observing situations. Instead, she made brief notes and then expanded on them when she got home to make them more complete and structured.

The data analysis was performed using MAXQDA 24 software. The chosen method of analysis is a qualitative approach named Applied Thematic Analysis (Guest et al., 2012). This approach is an inductive analysis of qualitative data that incorporates various techniques for effective data collection and analysis. It is designed to identify and examine themes. There are different stages that guide this investigation: familiarize yourself with the data by rereading the interviews and taking notes simultaneously; code the data; organize the codes and code the full dataset; identify themes by grouping codes into broader themes; review and refine themes and describe and interpret the themes. This Applied Thematic Analysis used mixed methods research design, i.e., the integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods, to better understand the research problem and answer the research questions by combining the collection of qualitative data through open-ended questions (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative data through closed-ended questions (interviews with answers on a scale of 1 to 5).

2.2 Limitations

Almost all the interviews were conducted in English, and most of the interviewees, including the researcher, did not have English as their mother tongue. One interview was conducted in Portuguese. The researcher felt that this limited their ability to express feelings and contributions accurately.

Through the interviewees' testimony and perspective, it was evident that the camp's rules and conditions are constantly changing, which makes responses quite variable as dynamics can change from one month to the next.

Another limitation may have been the researcher's proximity to the camp through the fieldwork being done and the environment in which the researcher found herself. At times, the researcher found it difficult to distance herself from the issues.

Another limitation is that the perspective of humanitarian actors on living conditions in refugee camps is explored instead of the perspective of the refugees themselves, who have a deeper and more accurate understanding of their living conditions. However, approaching the topic from the perspective of humanitarian workers and volunteers is a valid and interesting approach. From an ethical standpoint, interviewing refugees can be a painful and demanding process for many people living in these contexts.

Since interviews were conducted only with participants from one NGO, the lack of perspective from other organizations limited the variety of views. This is also related to the difficulty of getting NGOs to participate in studies conducted inside the camp due to the information protection requirements of the Greek government.

Additionally, since participants work in different areas of intervention within the camp, not all of them could easily answer all the questions. However, it was positive that certain participants explored some questions in greater depth, as they had a good understanding of specific areas of intervention and dynamics within the camp. Participants in office positions had less direct interaction with refugees and were unable to answer questions about how refugees feel in the camp as clearly. The time participants spent working in the camp was also related to their ability to retain knowledge, discuss issues, express themselves, and convey their complete vision and perspective.

CHAPTER 3

Results

The results presented allow us to study the living conditions in the refugee camp in Lesvos and the impact on people's quality of life from the perspective of the participants. The hypotheses/themes that emerged will be presented, taking into account the conditions in the camp, through questions regarding organization, services, and functioning; exploring the improvements between the first camp in Lesvos (Moria camp) and the current camp on the island (Mavrouvoni camp), and also exploring the participants' views on what can still be done to improve conditions in the camps and what challenges they still face. To facilitate presentation of the results, the number in parentheses after "N=" indicates the number of participants who mentioned the category in question. Quotes will be followed by the pseudonym of the corresponding participant.

3.1 Results

The following subchapters provide an analysis of how the participants responded to the various interview topics.

- Structure and organization

Regarding the structure and organization of the camp, the participants were asked to rate it between 1 (very poor) and 5 (very good), and it was possible to see that half of the participants rated this topic regarding the camp as "good". When asked about their general perspective on the Lesvos camp, they mention that it is a space divided into different zones¹¹ (N=1), blue, yellow, red and green (but now green zone it's empty), with housing structures divided between ISOboxes¹², Refugee Housing Unit (RHU¹³) and Rubb Halls¹⁴ (N=7), there are services provided by actors and organizations that make them work (N=3). It is a space shared by several nationalities (N=1) that is also designed to be temporary (=5).

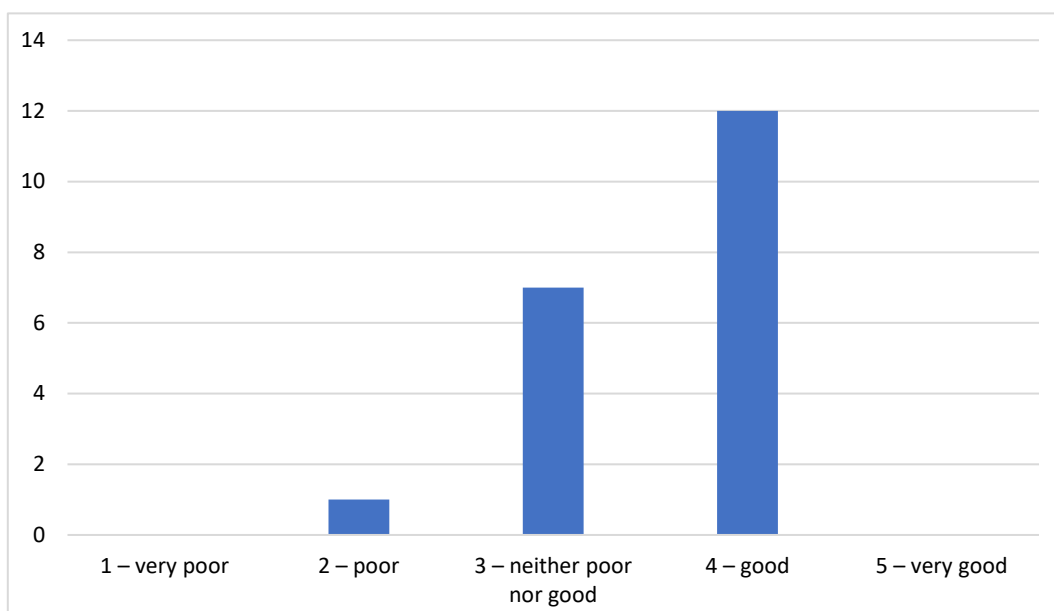
¹¹ For a better understanding, see Attachment C, RIC Mavrovouni Refugee Camp Map.

¹² ISOboxes are a type of living container, see Attachment E, Housing structure, ISOBox in Blue Zone.

¹³ RHU is "An innovative shelter solution (...) composed of several basic elements, including a lightweight steel frame, roof and wall panels, door and windows, floor covering, solar energy system (lamp and telephone charger) and an innovative anchoring system" UNHCR (n.d.b), see Attachment D, Housing structure, RHU in Blue Zone and Red Zone.

¹⁴ "A Rubb Hall is a type of large, relocatable, tent-like structure with an arched aluminum or galvanized iron frame, covered with a PVC skin" (United Nations, n.d.b), see Attachment F, Housing structure, RubbHalls in Yellow Zone.

Graph 3.1.1 Assessment of the structure and organization of the Mavrovouni refugee camp

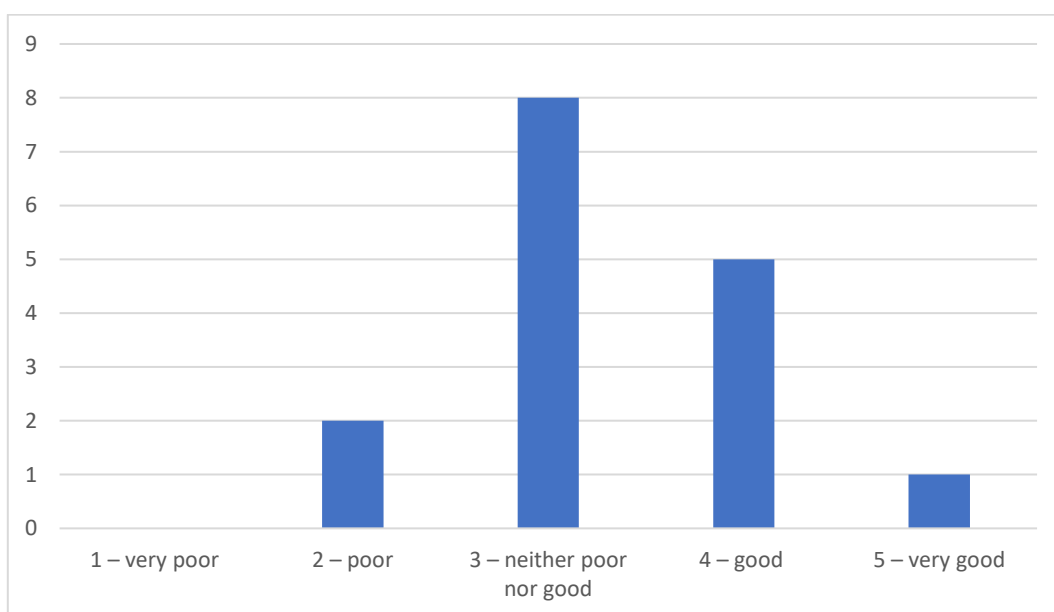


Source: Own elaboration, interviews Mavrovouni camp 2022

Location

Within the structure and organization of the camp, there are several indices of analysis, one of which is location (see Attachment G). The participants' classification of the camp's location on the island, where the majority classified it as “neither poor nor good,” since there are “decent pros and decent cons for both of it” (Lisa) (N=4).

Graph 3.1.2 Assessment of the location of the Mavrovouni refugee camp



Source: Own elaboration, interviews Mavrovouni camp 2022

Climate issues were raised as a negative aspect (N= 4) due to the camp's proximity to the ocean, which leaves residents more exposed to wind and cold during the winter (N=11), and is associated with the trauma of the journey they made to the island (N=2) - "I also have cases and they say, yeah, we hate the sea because we have a trauma of it and they live near to the sea" (Jim), and because it is so centrally located and highly visible to everyone is negative from the perspective of the local Greek population (N=5) - "it's not hidden in the bushes or somewhere in the middle of the island" (Miranda).

On the other hand as something positive in the summer, as it is cooler and they can swim (N=4) - "POCs are getting swimming lessons right now" (Joyce), and those coming from Turkey have easy access to the island (N=4) - "a few months ago. It came from Turkey directly through camp. So that was, uh, there was I think a good solution because then all the organizations were there. They were there. So, they couldn't push, push back there anymore because all the organizations were charged" (Jim). Location is perceived central (N=4) - "it's nice that it's like not like out in the middle of nowhere" (Lisa), allowing them a certain degree of independence to go out and run their own errands (N=3) - "it's close in a way for people to still have a more dignified way to go to places and be part of certain culture, then I would say it is a good location in that way" (Samuel), either by public transport (N=5) or on foot (N=3) to the city of Mytilene (N=11) - "I always argue for the point that people should be close to other people who live here and are locals. Because the more you separate them, the less they can find their own community here. know it's still not integration and for sure not inclusion, but it's better than far away in a forest or something" (Marga), with close proximity to off-field services (N=6), especially markets (N=5) - "what is nice, that they have LIDL little next door, So if they need to do some shopping, they can easily, yeah" (Joanne).

Housing structure

Housing is organized into clusters "I think, I think it's good like how they like separate it by like nationality. They can try to keep like nationalities together or like the vulnerable, like the single women are usually together, the single men are usually together. I think that's really important just for, to help with like that safety feeling and secure feeling" (Lisa), and different areas and housing unit organisations within the refugee camp have different impacts on people's lives (N=4) - "I think for the ones that are in ISOboxes, that's the best spot and everybody knows it. So if you're not there, then it impacts you immediately, because you are not living where you want to live" (Annika), ISOboxes being the best structures (N=3) and the Yellow zone, Rubb Halls, being the worst structures for living in the camp (N=6) - "So many people in one Rubb Hall, and there's so much stress. So, I don't know. If I said about the Yellow Zone, the Rubb Halls, then I think, uh, yeah, it has impact on their lives" (Jim), "I have never liked single men in the Rubb Halls, so I don't like, from the very first day, I argued with the

government about this, I thought it was a really bad idea, I felt like they wanted to put them in a prison and make them feel like prisoners, and that doesn't help the mental state, so I don't like that" (Daniel).

The participants were told that complete housing structures, such as houses, should be built to meet basic needs (N=11) - "So being able, having kitchens around where they can cook, having more normal things in their house, so having a shower, having a toilet, maybe having a fridge, I don't know, stuff like that. Have electricity. I think these things, having locks on the doors (...) I think it's a simple thing that can be done very easily", being able to live more authentically (N=3) - "Just, like, more normal. Like, human life" (Miranda), if this option is not possible, it is recommended that everyone lives in ISOboxes instead, as this would be a significant improvement (N=3). Compared to the Moria camp, the current camp is much larger (N = 4) and better organized and structured, with improved access to services (N = 6) - "more space between the tents, between the RHUs, tents. There's, like, decent roads where cars can come, so where, like, firefighters, ambulance, NGOs, police can, yeah" (Nina), especially with toilet and shower facilities (N=6), and with better housing facilities (N=4) where each person has their own space (N=3) - except for single men and some single women who share the space - where living areas are better defined - "[in Moria] we had Section B and C, and the, and the new arrivals (...) But the, the space there was so limited that we didn't have space for all the, everyone that should have been in those special sections [in Mavrouvoni] our design sections for, for different groups of people, it's a lot, a lot better conditions now". The outdoor space is mentioned as an area for improvement, with suggestions including the addition of green spaces (N = 3) and more sheltered and shaded areas (N = 5) - "Outside space that's protected from the weather. And I think green, plant life, trees (...) I think those would help the mental health of people" (Daniel) and having color inside the camp (N=1) - "bring, like, more, like, color into it (...) Talking to just, like, one, like, trauma lady specialist and she said... What did she call it? She called it, like, It's, like, there's not, like, it's, like, very, like..."loonerlighter", everything is black and white (...) you see the white RHUs, white rubble, white containers, white gravel (...) in that place that has an impact on, like, a person's psyche if you don't have, like, color integrated in. Yeah, so it's, like, bringing color into camp" (Lisa).

Electricity

The issue of electricity within the camp is considered one of the worst aspects (N=4), regularly causing problems with generators (N=5) and leading to fires (N=3). Access to electricity is available 24 hours a day, but only in a specific area of the camp: the ISOboxes (N=8) - "There's one area in camp, they have 24-hour electricity, because of the medical reasons. There are living people with...for example they really need...they need something for medical things, then they can live there" (Tessa), and for the rest of the camp is only available during certain short, defined periods (N=11) - "9 to 12 it's off and from 2 to 5 it's off" (Kathy). Once again, the Yello zone is the worst zone (N=3) - "The Rubb Halls is the worst

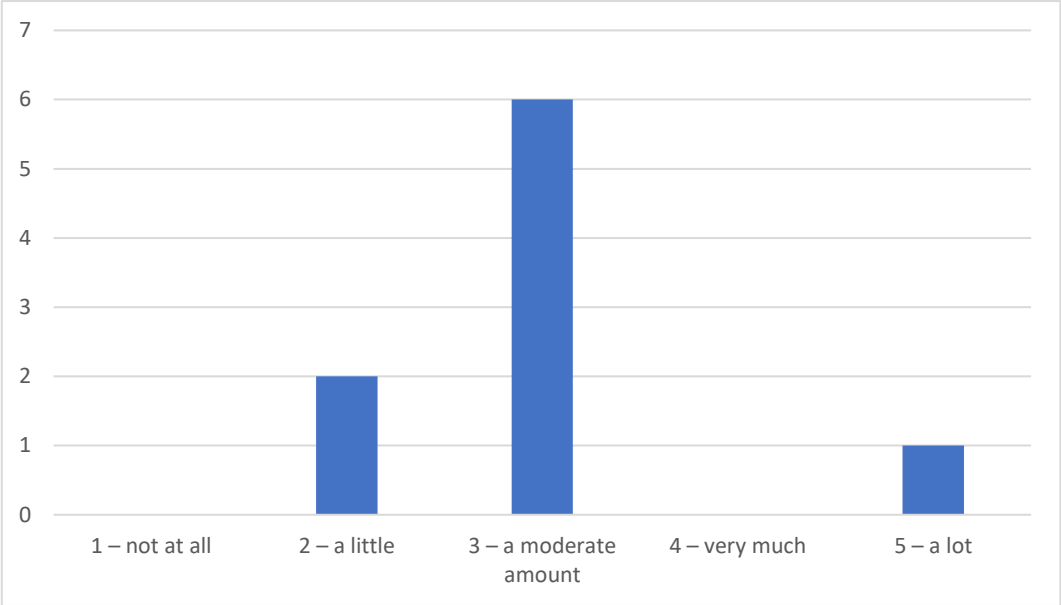
(...) the fires were there, because the electricity network is just not able to carry all the plug-ins in” (Annika), and the Red Zone has no access to electricity at all (N=1). People have to wait for electricity to be available before they can heat up food or even cook (N=8) - “It was very difficult during Ramadan because specific times they are allowed to or want to cook and if it's not working it's very bad” (Marga), “if you want to cook or if you want to make tea for someone, if you want to charge your phone, all not possible” (Marielle), and it can also be challenging on very hot or very cold days. (N=7). When asked about the lack of electricity throughout the camp, 24 hours a day, some participants mention issues related to limited government budgets (N=3) - “And the government has very limited spending availability, so they had, I think, generators, some of them were donated by certain NGOs, some were donated by the UNHCR, and the government has strict rules about where they can spend money” (Daniel), or the issue of generators (N=5) - “Well, there's probably a why behind the why, you know, I mean, the practical reason is because the camp is on generators, and they can't run the generators 24 hours. They have to arrest the generators or they break them” (Daniel), as well as a problem for the island itself (N=1) - “And I know the electricity plant at Mitilini is a very old one. It's a very old one, so... you can't expect that the refugee camp has better electricity than the local people on the island” (Joyce). An reflection is made on how the lack of electricity impacts the well-being of people living in the camp (N=1) - “It's hard, I mean, okay, like, in the summer, the lack of shaded areas is obviously an impact on their life, it means they stay indoors more, and that impacts your mental, emotional, mental health, so yeah, it's not, there's no green in camp, there's very little green anyway, there's like big trees over here, but that's it, so I think those things are part of their features, and they affect people's mental health” (Daniel), “because they are from cultures that are super hospitable, so like when I come, they want to give me tea, and then they cannot give me tea, because the electric is not working” (Marielle). Access to electricity throughout the day for everyone in the camp was identified as a necessary improvement (N=5), as was the need for better fire risk prevention (N=2).

- **Access to Services**

Food and water

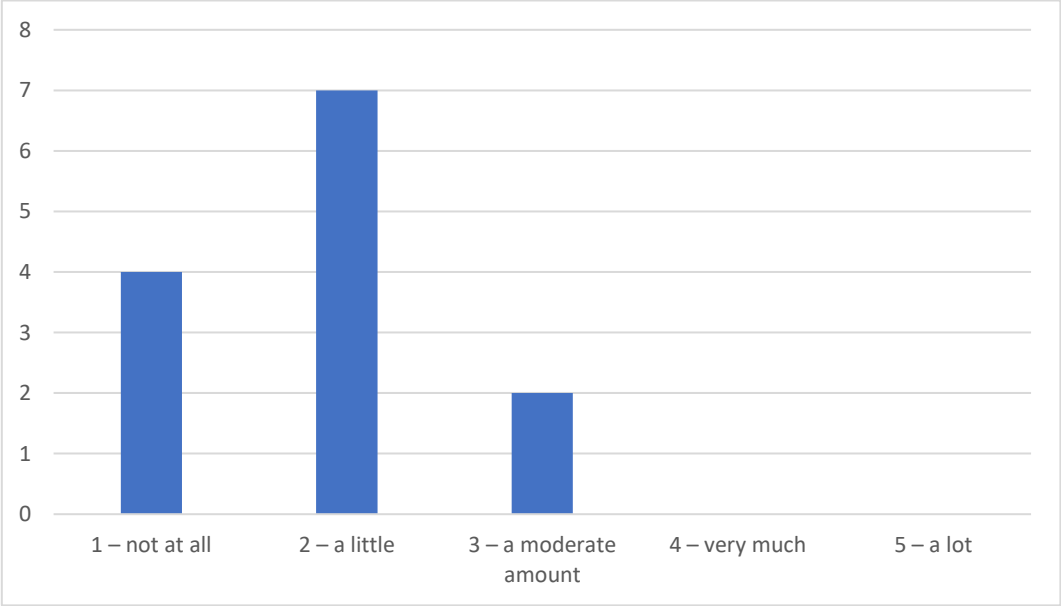
As for services in the camp, food is provided by the Greek government and distributed by an NGO within the camp (N=2), with distribution taking place “every day, twice a day” (Clare) (N=8), in the morning and in the afternoon (N=6). They also have access to water, in large quantities (N=9), bottled water is distributed daily (N=4), and there is also access to refill stations (N=2). Participants were asked to rate the quantity and quality of food distributed on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot). Regarding quantity, the main characteristic was described as “enough” (N=4), with some even stating “there is really a lot of food you see that there is quite some food waste in that way people eat the bread” (Samuel).

Graph 3.1.3 Assessment of the quantity of food the Mavrovouni refugee camp



Source: Own elaboration, interviews Mavrovouni camp 2022

Graph 3.1.4 Assessment of the quality of food in the Mavrovouni refugee camp



Source: Own elaboration, interviews Mavrovouni camp 2022

Regarding quality, the perspective is much more negative because they spend so much time on the camp and eat the same menus (N=3), the aspect of the food is also mentioned (N=2), the fact that they have to eat cold food due to lack of electricity (N=1), and the lack of nutrients and quality (N=4) “It's also, like, not nutritious, you know? What is breakfast? I think it's an orange, six bottles of water, and then one of those croissants that are highly processed and come in the same plastic bag every day.

So, first of all, I think, like, quality-wise, it's not nutritious food that they get "(Sonia). Due to the poor quality of the food distributed inside the camp, people cook their own food or mix it with it (N=18), having money facilitates the process of buying ingredients and cooking one's own food (N=6) - "Sometimes they split the food from the food line, and then they mix it with other vegetables and stuff. And then they make another meal from it, and other guys buy stuff at the LIDL, but not everyone can do that. Depends" (Jim). Despite the improvement in food quality compared to Moria (N=3) - "I have seen it grown because even (...) about five months ago, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum or like the government basically, they tried their best (...) So about five months, four months ago, they got different caterers and I've seen people like them more" (Kathy), several participants (N=5) mentioned the ideal solution would be to replace food distribution with the distribution of ingredients for people to cook themselves. The food distributed at the food line contrasts with the assessment of food provided by other organizations (N=2) - "The food from the food line is not super good. But the food that they get from Because We Carry¹⁵ is super good. The food they get from other organizations" (Marielle) - food distributed to ensure access adapted to different realities, bringing a better quality of life to people. In the camp, specific food is distributed for certain conditions (N=6) - diabetic or have high blood pressure, or people who have lactose or glucose intolerance dado pela Home for All, All4Aid and One Happy Family¹⁶ (N=6); pregnant women and families with little children can get different food (N=6) "From Because We Carry, the pregnant ladies get a nice batch of vegetables and nice food" (Annika), "and women with newborns they care for the 9 months and then up to 2 years for the mothers and their food they get free vegetables and food with more vitamins to get the mothers healthy during the time" (Marga).

Education

Inside the camp, non-formal education (N=7) is provided by NGOs (Eurorelief and Teachers Beyond Borders¹⁷) and by a Greek NGO, METAdrasi¹⁸ (N=6), while outside the camp, formal education is provided by a Greek school in Mytilene (N=13). Thus, all children have access to education, whether formal or informal. The major change in the camp is the encouragement of attendance at Greek schools (N=4) - "formal education is the big push right now, and so the ministry [of education] wants

¹⁵ Because We Carry is a practical and emotional support for mothers that go through all stages of motherhood <https://becausewecarry.org/en/>.

¹⁶ Home for All is a social charity kitchen cooking and delivering prepared meals <https://www.homeforall.eu/>. All4Aid food bank operates like a supermarket, with each woman choosing free dry food <https://all4aid.org/lesvos-greece/>.

One Happy Family operated a community space provision to food and basic needs items <https://ohf-lesvos.org/en/about-us/>.

¹⁷ Beyond Borders supports educational opportunities among those who are displaced <https://teachbeyond.org/>.

¹⁸ METAdrasi operates in educational programmes and Greek language courses <https://metadrasi.org/en/>.

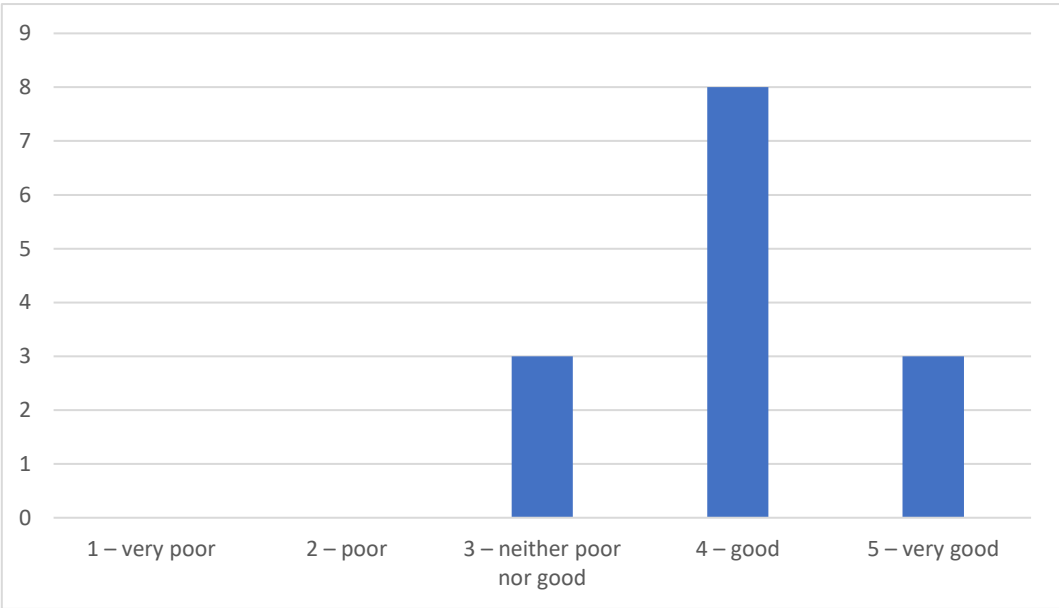
all children enrolled in formal education, which would mean Greek public schools. And they have the capacity for that because there's only like 200 something kids in camp right now, school age kind in camp" (Lisa). Attending Greek school is seen as positive for children's integration (N=2) and for getting them out of the camp environment (N=1). However, inclusion in Greek schools has not been easy for everyone (N=1) and there is also resistance from some families (N=2), it is therefore important to maintain informal education within the camp. Non-formal education began to emerge in the camp in order to provide an educational response that did not previously exist "is to provide a safe and secure learning environment for the kids of Mavrovouni [and] So from within all the different educational organizations, we could reach every single child in camp" (Lisa). A more fluid and artistic education (N=1), in which various dynamics are developed "we have special projects, like the clowns coming in (...) somebody came in and taught the kids how to play flute" (Lisa). Provided only by NGOs, there are mother-toddler classes for children up to 6 years old (N=1) "where special teachers go to the mothers and teach them basic words of English, but also do a lot of relationship work, bonding work, how to connect mothers and the toddlers together" (Marga), there is also a new program adapted for children with special educational needs (N=1) - "It's sports and health, also mental health (...) if there is a kid with autism, they provide special programs to help their parents to understand the children better" (Marga). There are also cases of families who do not want their children to attend either formal or informal school, and in these cases education is approached differently within the camp (N=1) - "they just like don't see maybe the value of (...) they just can't even think about school right now. And so that's where we do outreach (...) we have around 40 kids that come to our actual school, but then the team, every afternoon they go out and visit the rest of the kids in camp" (Lisa). There is also the opportunity for adults in the camp to have access to education (N=2) as well as this, there are spaces created by NGOs that promote leisure activities within the camp (N=2) - "coffeeshop and the place where they can sit (...) do have the football thing and the basketball" (Annika). Education provides routine (N=1) and as well as preparing them for the country they will be living in (N=1) - "like just having structure in your day with, okay, I have to go out of bed, I have to go to school, I have to make friends or hang out with people" (Miriam), "But right now, I think we should look into more ways to really, really encourage children or even make it mandatory to have them in school (...) If they one day go to Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, it's so good if they already have some sort of a base of at least learning the alphabet and things like that" (Joyce), but there is a need to improve responses to adolescents (N=1), train people through professional education programmes (N=2), as well as to establish something similar to what existed in Moria, complete with its own businesses (N=1) - "But, yeah, it would be great if they could just start their own company, but that's more like a dream" (Joanne), the community spaces (N=2) and playground (N=2). It is noted that the COVID period was a complex phase for children's access to education (N=2) - "because of the COVID restrictions, they have

to be vaccinated at a certain time, they needed to be tested twice a week. And that wasn't very helpful for people because if they were tested positive, then the whole family had to go in quarantine for 10 days. So, they preferred not to go to school” (Joyce).

Medical Services

Participants were asked to rate refugees' access to medical services on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good), with the results shown below.

Graph 3.1.5 Assessment of access of refugees to medical services in the Mavrovouni refugee camp



Source: Own elaboration, interviews Mavrovouni camp 2022

There is access to health services (N=3), with medical actors within the camp considered to be quite good (N=6), varied (N=2), and constantly present (N=3). Boat Refugee Foundation¹⁹ (BRF) is the NGO operating within the camp, considered to be quite qualified (N=4), with the Greek response also present within the camp, Hellenic National Public Health Organization²⁰ (EODY). Outside the camp, there is also the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)²¹, also considered competent (N=3) - “Even MSF, that doesn't have a presence in the camp, they're proactive in following their cases. They're very aware of what's going on in camp, and they're set up just outside of camp” (Daniel), and EODY and BRF provides health services (N=10). For urgent episodes during the night, the police also provide assistance (N=1).

¹⁹ Boat Refugee Foundation provides primary and emergency health services to the people living in the camp on Lesbos <https://bootvluchteling.nl/en/>

²⁰ Hellenic National Public Health Organization is the National Public Health Organization <https://eody.gov.gr/en/>

²¹ Médecins Sans Frontières provide first aid to people coming to the Greek islands <https://www.msf.org/greece>

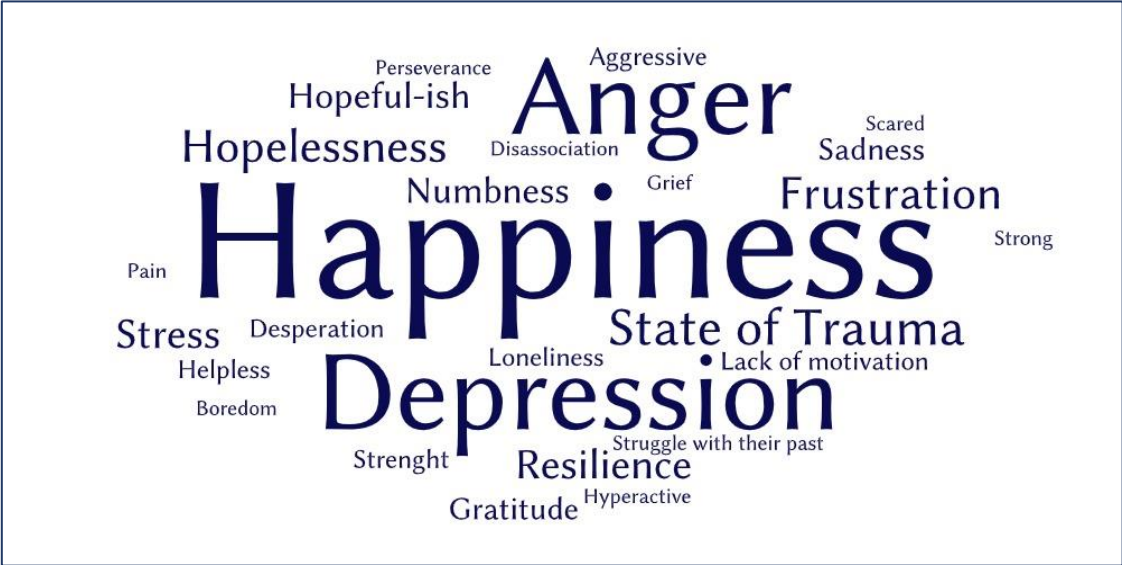
There is a preference for BRF (N=3), even though it is considered to be more “demorial” (N=3). Several organizations work together to provide better access to healthcare for refugees (N=1) - “ We can be working with a lot of organizations together to bring the people the most best medical access that they need” (Marga), but medical responses cannot always provide the necessary support, when there is a very complex problem or specialty, such as surgery (N=5), people are referred to larger hospitals in Mytilene or Athens (N=4). Although refugees have experienced racism in Greek hospitals (N=4), with the Greek healthcare system and its services being classified as negative and more difficult to provide assistance (N=4), even the Greek population considers it to be poor service (N=2). In relation to challenges, it should be noted that doctors are not always allowed to come into the camp to provide care (N=1), that a person's asylum status also interferes with access to healthcare (N=1), and that psychological support is not always available (N=2), but that this is something that is being improved (N=1) - “there are quite some organizations that give mental health support, and it recently has been improving” (Nina), “Like, for a very long time, single men did not really have anyone to go to for mental health support, unless it was, like, critical, basically (...) Because organizations often focus on women, children, then the fathers, and then it's less from the single men” (Nina).

- **Living in the camp**

Physical and psychological well-being of refugees

Participants report that there is also a relationship between camp conditions and the physical and psychological well-being of refugees (N=17), and worse the conditions in the camp, the worse people's mental state (N=6) - “So in general they have a huge impact. Your living conditions are applying to your mental health. Your mental health will go down if you have bad living conditions. If you have rats in your ISOboxes or RHU or somewhere for sure it's something to stress about” (Marga), “especially in yellow zones. Like, they're just stacked in there, and Rubb Halls are so loud. Like, if you own a quiet space, good luck” (Candice), which can cause stress and insecurity (N=6), such as outdoor spaces with a lack of green areas (N=3) - “if you just bring a tiny bit of stability, they're able to move on to their next hopeful basic need, whereas they're able to process maybe 1% of what happened in Turkey, you know? I'm like, I see that just genuinely, their shelter does assist with that” (Kathy). Factors that hinder people's mental health include sharing the same accommodation structure (N=3), feeling insecure (N=4), the type of food they eat and who they share their neighborhood with (N=2) - “if you feel safe where you live, it's better for your mental condition” (Marielle), “if the food is not good, then you get physical pain, or you don't eat enough, and then you will get weak as well” (Miriam). The issue of mental health among refugees is explored by asking participants to name the main emotions and symptoms shown by refugees, the results are analyzed using a word cloud:

Figure 3.1.6 Reference to the main emotions and symptoms refugees show inside the Mavrovouni refugee camp



Source: Own elaboration, interviews Mavrovouni camp 2022

In addition to emotions, participants mention physical symptoms that residents experience related to mental health (N=3) - “because most of the time, if you're feeling really depressed, you also get physical problems” (Miranda) - symptoms like “headache, trouble sleeping, pain in the back, pain in the legs, trouble eating (...) High blood pressure” (Miranda) (N=2), “headaches come from stress (...) pain in your belly” (Miriam), stomach aches (N=1), and insecurity also disturbs sleep (N=3) - “I think for the single men, if you've been in the Rubb Halls in winter, it's horrific, so many of them just can't sleep during the night because of the wind and the rain and other things. I hear a lot of single women that can't sleep at night because they don't want to go to the bathroom during the night. So, I think sleeping problems is on a wide level. But also, I've talked to families as well, of which the dad says, he feels like he could finally sleep here, but because his brain is still so much in Moria mode, where you just couldn't sleep at night, you had to stay awake to protect your family, and he just can't seem to get himself out of that” (Sonia).

Traumatic situations and experiences, gunshot wounds, punishment, and torture can also cause various problematic physical, psychological, and mental symptoms (N=1), such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (N=1) - “it's not the weak people that get here, it's the people who are really resistant, persistent to come and really push through to come here (...) I think physically gotten through a lot of things to get here and then, what you see is people coming here who have like pure PTSD, who are struggling from what happened, why they had to flee and then the whole way coming here” (Samuel). Participants feel that refugees need to numb their feelings (N=1) - “the need to numb themselves, I guess” (Candice), doing so through drug and alcohol use (N=3) - “I really think that people do things

when they're high or drunk that they have no idea what they're doing. They would never do it otherwise. Because they're here, they need to numb their feelings" (Candice), eventually, these consumptions worsened their situations (N=1), leading to overdoses and drunkenness (N=2). Drug use is also associated with a desire to dissociate from what they are experiencing (N=2) - "Disassociation, where they've been taking drugs for even minutes from trauma. Where they can't even, like they can't even think in the presence anymore" (Clare). Many people find themselves at a point where they feel lost and without purpose in life (N=4) - "I had one friend tell me one time, she's like, I wish I would have stayed back in Afghanistan and died myself. Because she says here, it's like we don't have anything to live for. We don't really have a life anymore. But she said, "I have three kids now. So now I have four lives that are in here" (Marsha). On the other hand, it is described that there is almost a requirement to be in a state of happiness to be able to deal with everything (N=1) - "all the happiness from some people, that they say, "okay, if we are not joking or laughing, then it can be very worse here". Because then you think a lot and you do nothing anymore" (Jim). Regarding a participant who works with children at the camp, she describes two opposing attitudes she has observed among the children (N=1) - "I think for the little children, I would say numbness. So that they are just, by all the trauma that they already have encountered, like being on the boat and before that maybe crossing the mountains of Iran (...) somehow they don't show emotion. Or very hyperactive, aggressive, that's also one of the emotions that I see (...) Because I have seen a lot of them in my class and I see either very hyperactive, aggressive (...) Or they have no emotion at all. And I think that has to do with the trauma that they have been through" (Joyce). With the Afghan women she works with, she portrays a striking resilience and the importance of having some kind of occupation during the day (N=1) - "For the women, I would say also more numbness, I don't see aggression, but I also see a lot of resilience (...) They are really strong. And I think even because they have duties to do, they have diapers to change, they have to feed their little ones. They keep busy, being busy (...) So in a way, I think that somehow that rescues them" (Joyce). Thus, mental health is considered poor, especially in situations of trauma in the camp (N=1) - "I think nothing about life in camp is normal, which then means, like, it's poor on the level of... It's not a stable environment to heal from your trauma, it might only increase it" (Sonia), because the camp promote, accumulating, worsening, and initiating new traumas (N=8) - "Like for instance, if you feel unsafe in camp, it triggers, it triggers like the memories of trauma, previous trauma, right?" (Clare), "I don't think it's the actual main reason why they are feeling this way, because when they arrive, they're already at a very vulnerable stage. So, the living condition in not giving them a space to actually rest from the things that from before. So, it's an on going. So, I think it's more stagnation and making it worse, but it's not the main reason because of their stage of vulnerability" (Sabrina). To help manage these issues, activities that benefit their psychological well-being are increasingly being introduced (N=3), the lack of activities creates more situations of stress and

depression (N=4) - "I think the lack of activities is really bad. Because you're, I don't know, when I'm stress out, when I have a lot in my mind or worried about something, it helps me to go for a walk, to go do something, to do something with my hands, all these types of things" (Lisa), as well as the impossibility of people working and being busy (N=2). In summary "main emotions are more negative, but you obviously also see a lot of positive emotions" (Tina). Mental health is something that needs to be improved (N=3), because it is related to several other structural, organizational, and dynamic aspects and services in the field, one of which is safety, especially at night (N=3) and increased policing (N=3).

Healthcare and vulnerability

About vulnerability people inside the camp, the access is considered positive (N=2) - "vulnerability office" has done a really good job with that" (Lisa), where facilities are provided (N=2), with roads in good condition and wide enough for people to move around (N=4), and there are housing units with a specific location for a "someone who has mobility issues (...) Someone who can hardly walk or needs a wheelchair or something"(Clare).

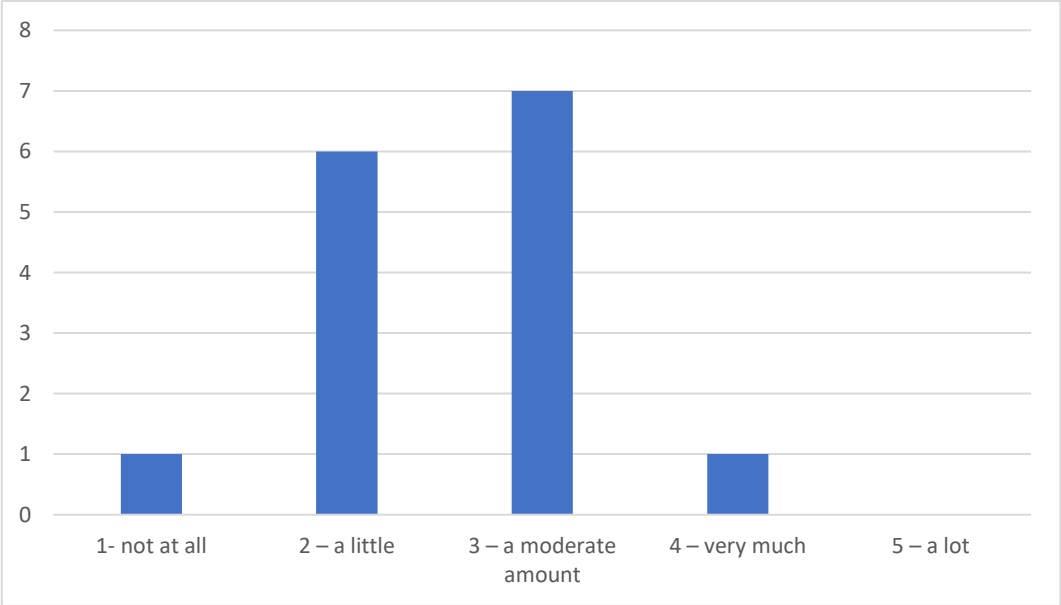
On the other hand the people who have severe mobility issues, access to services and movement within the camp is still not ideal, because it is necessary to walk a lot (N=3), and the camp is not as well prepared as it should be for situations of vulnerability (N=7), as well as the need for more teams that can identify situations of vulnerability and respond to them (N=2) - " Like, there was one lady that needed to move because she was old and had to walk a long way to the toilet and would only go once every 24 hours. So she just wasn't drinking enough water then either, and so it sometimes makes me wonder if that's happening more and we just don't realize it. Or we just don't know about it" (Candice). Access to toilets or showers is not the best (N=5), nor is access to doctors (N=2), requiring services with better access (N=5). Although a large camp improves the quality of life of people in the camp, it must be accompanied by good spatial organization for cases of vulnerability (N=2).

Security

when asked about the issue of feeling of insecurity within the camp, several points intersect on this issue (N=3) - "I also hear a lot of stories like that the women, especially like in Blue Zone, they just don't feel safe. They don't feel safe going to the toilet at night. There is stealing a lot. If you don't have a key or a lock for your room, the chance is pretty big that they will break into your room. So, yeah. I don't know" (Miranda). Situations such as drug dealing and theft increase feelings of insecurity (N=8), thus linking feelings of security to crime. Insecurity in the camp can be caused by substance abuse and drug use (N=1) - which is pointed out as a way of coping with reality and traumatic experiences (N=2). Theft is a reality in the camp (N=18), which happens more frequently in the Yellow Zone (N=8) - "Theft, Rub Halls right now is crazy. I don't hear it as much in the containers. The singles, I hear often, like I said,

maybe every few weeks” (Kathy), more frequently during the night (N=2) – “Sometimes people tell me about that they're scared, like what I said about like, during the night, like "people knock on the door. Alibaba, Alibaba" (Marielle), being pointed out as causes of the lack of monetary support from the Greek government (N=2) and the lack of psychological support (N=1) - “Like, if they were not in an environment where they had time to overthink everything. And weren't traumatized and still didn't need to medicate or drink or do drugs. I don't know that they would really do those (...) I think a lot of their actions stem from their situation, I guess” (Candice). Related to situations of insecurity in camp, sexual abuse is also mentioned as a reality experienced (N=15), “especially like in the evenings” (Lisa) (N=4), predominantly against women (N=2). Violence is another reality present camp (N=12), especially in the Yellow Zone (N=2), and at evenings (N=2), with the specificity of domestic violence (N=5) - “Like we have, we call them DA cases, domestic abuse, where they've just been hitting their wives. We have those still every three weeks or so” (Kathy). Participants were asked to rate their sense of safety within the camp and specifically within the housing structures on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot), as shown in the graph.

Graph 3.1.7 Assessment of how people feel safe inside the Mavrovouni refugee camp



Source: Own elaboration, interviews Mavrovouni camp 2022

Participants reported that the sense of security inside the housing structures depends on where in the camp people live (N=4), the RHUs are structures where people can open lockers and enter, resulting in less security (N=8) - “People never leave their RHU right now anymore, because if they just leave, they will come immediately. I know a lot of people just sleeping with their most important stuff directly on their body to prevent it from getting stolen. I know that a lot of women don't ever go alone

anymore in the toilet, in the night (...) An RHU you can lock it but you can break it if you want to. So my eyes I'd use a less safe than ISO boxes" (Marga), just as those in the Rubb Halls do not feel safe (N=8), mainly due to theft (N=6) and fire (N=2) concerns - "like, the risk on fires, especially in the yellow zone, has made them feel very unsafe, They started sleeping during the day instead of the night to" (Nina), those who remain in the ISObox are considered to have greater feelings of safety within the camp (N=7). In the Blue Zone (N=3), women are referred to as the group that feels least safe in the camp (N=6), especially when going to the bathroom at night (N=7) due to cases of sexual abuse, and women who have families feel safer than single women (N=4) - "single women feel often much more unsafe than a woman with a family, for example, with a husband, with older kids" (Nina). One of the most frequently mentioned safety concerns relates to the difference between day and night at the camp (N=7), where it is possible to feel safe during the day (N=3) - "During the day, it's right now very safe. You can let your children out. You can let them play outside. It's a very safe space for children during the day" (Marga), and the evening a less safe time (N=9) - "after midnight or something, he said that's when, I can't remember how he described it, but almost like that's when the crazy people come out" (Clare). The fact that people are unable to lock their doors (N=7) is also raised, related to the different accommodation structures and the resulting feeling of security (N=5) - "ISO boxes, which in my head is at least safer because they're able to lock it and close it, and they've all refused" (Kathy). Both theft and violence are decreasing in frequency in the camp (N=5) - "Alibaba", and I think it's also so much safer, because of the presence of the police, and people have their own ISO box, so they don't have to share. That makes it also much safer, they can lock it" (Joyce), compared to Moria, these cases of insecurity are less frequent (N=3) due to a greater police presence and intervention in the camp (N=2). In addition, the surrounding environment of the accommodations influences their sense of security (N=5), especially the neighbors (N=6) - "like if they have a whole bunch of families all, all around each other, they kind of, they all look out for each other, and so I think if they have that, they feel more safe" (Clare).

Sense of community

When asked about the role of a sense of community within the camp, participants mentioned that it promotes feelings of security and support within the Lesvos refugee camp (N=13), described as a strong relationship established through organization into communities and nationalities (N=5) - "So, Somalis stick up for Somalis. Sierra Leoneans stick up for Sierra Leoneans" (Annika), with the Somali community characterized as the most united in the camp (N=4). Positive aspects of the sense of community include helping/supporting each other (N=7), caring for one another (N=4) - "they're brothers, they're family, and they take care of each other" (Clare), promote a sense of security (N=6) - "like the vulnerable, like the single women are usually together, The single men are usually together. I

think that's really important just for, to help with like that safety feeling and secure feeling" (Lisa) and have a sense of belonging (N=1) - "it's in a way beautiful to see that people are not left by themselves, there is a support" (Samuel). This sense of community also applies to the relationships between neighbors within the camp, who provide support and security (N=2).

The camp's spatial organization also attempts to take nationality into account (N=3), this is considered a positive because people can speak the same language (N=3) and those who have been there longer can guide those who arrived more recently (N=2). Being part of the community within the camp is also a way of "it takes a little bit of the pain away" (Samuel), as well as creating stability in an unstable place (N=1). It is also mentioned that a sense of community enables traditions to be maintained in places that are neither one's country nor one's home (N=8) - "Afghan people, they have a lot of joy together, all their dances, and Eid Mubarak was just such a joy" (Marga), "helps them to feel at home" (Miriam). Another positive aspect of the sense of community is the presence of "community leaders" (N=3), allowing communities to have a voice within the camp, "it's also nice that someone listens to it" (Miranda). Some participants consider the sense of community to be neither positive nor negative (N=2), they take into account the fact that racism exists between groups and nationalities (N=3), as well as ethnic tension between different groups (N=3) - "Afghans and people from Africa don't like each other" (Annika), "there is racism between certain groups and other groups. And so there is a kind of a way they treat each other. But it's not the same as attacking each other with knives and sticks. They're carrying out their wars here" (Daniel). In addition to causing tension, a sense of community can lead to conflicts and dangerous situations for people who are different from the community (N=1) - But if you have a problem with the Somali community, it's dangerous. For example, if you're gay or lesbian, and they don't like you (...) you have a big problem" (Marga), or if you have a problem with someone in the community, the whole community will turn against that person (N=4). Those who lack a sense of community and do not belong to a group (N=3) end up feeling depressed (N=2), like outsiders (N=1), and lonely (N=4) - "If there are persons who don't have community, you can for sure see that they are more depressed. They don't have somebody looking after them" (Annika). Therefore, some argue that a sense of community can sometimes create more tension in the camp (N=1), they argue that it would be healthier if these community distinctions were weaker (N=1), allowing for more integration and mixing between communities (N=2), as is done in schools, also facilitating their integration into Europe (N=1), although it is assumed that breaking down walls is positive when groups and communities mix (N=2). In addition, the surrounding environment of the accommodations influences their sense of security (N=5), especially the neighbors (N=6) - "like if they have a whole bunch of families all, all around each other, they kind of, they all look out for each other, and so I think if they have that, they feel more safe" (Clare).

Control of entry and exit

Regarding entry and exit control at the camp, participants are referred through the main gate (N=2) - "There is somewhat control. People get checked when they go into camp, so they have to stop at the gate to show their card. And also when they leave," (Annika) and the way it is done is not generally seen as positive (N=7) - "I don't like how they are treated at the gate" (Annika), through the search of belongings (N=4), passing through the metal detector (N=5) and checking the number on the list (N=2) is a mechanism that causes a feeling of life in prison or jail (N=7) and dehumanization (N=2) - "all these concrete walls, and the barbed wire, and the gate, and the police [but] I do not really see it as a prison, but, I can imagine that others do, like, it definitely has characteristics of a prison" (Nina). This dynamic significantly impacts people's lives by limiting the space in which they can live (N=2) - "So I think that people who come here as free people that are looking for a better place can be really unpleasantly surprised by even having a gate or having to register when you go in and out, because it says that you don't have the freedom to move wherever you want. And not having freedom, I think that's a really big impact on the life of the people here" (Miriam), although participants understand the reason for the control (N=7) and recognize its value in protecting people (N=7) - "I think most of the people even appreciate or understand why it's done" (Joyce), but even so, insecure situations happen at camp (N=1) - "So there's a lot of security and control of it, but people don't feel safe, free at all. So I think that's what I don't like about it" (Jim). Searches are only carried out on refugees and not on all people entering the camp (N = 5), including the participants themselves (N=4) - "nobody checks my backpack, nobody checks anything. I could be a bad person and trying to do something and nobody knows, you know, because they assume I'm good" (Lisa), this makes the way searches, entries, and exits are carried out unfair (N=1). Currently, people can enter and exit within the established hours, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (N=13), which has been an improvement since the COVID period (N=7), when entry and exit restrictions were quite strict and residents could not leave all at once, nor at the same time of day (N=11), which was a period characterized by the promotion of segregation among residents (N=2). Thus, the importance of the camp being a free space (N=4) with ample room (N=4) and less control over entry and exit provides a greater sense of freedom and lessens the feeling of being in prison (N=6) - "I think when we're busy in the camp, it's pretty good. People can move around freely and it's big. I especially like the walk behind the hill, like the ocean, that's very good. Just to escape a little bit from camp. I don't like how they are treated at the gate" (Annika); "they have no freedom. And I think that's something that human beings are always looking for, is that no one takes away their freedom (...) it's negative, staying in a space for so long"²² (Lucas), where the gate and all its associated management

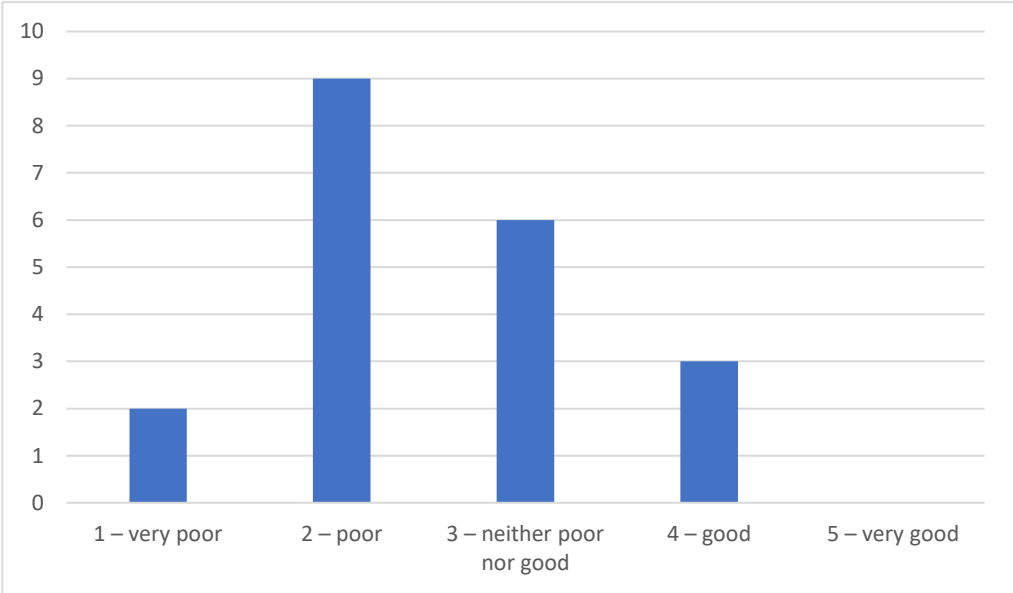
²² was translated from Portuguese to English.

are pointed out as a major limitation on this freedom (N=5) - “it's not like completely free feeling (...) it's not a normal place to live” (Joanne).

Quality of life

Participants were asked to rate the quality of life of residents within the Lesvos refugee camp on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good). This rating took into account various aspects and dynamics of life in the camp that will be discussed throughout this study, include structural and organizational conditions, psychological needs, access to services such as education, security, length of stay, and the asylum process.

Graph 3.8 Assessment of quality of life of refugees in the Mavrovouni refugee camp



Source: Own elaboration, interviews Mavrovouni camp 2022

When asked about the lives of refugees in the camp and how they feel about living there, they say that prolonged stay in the Lesvos refugee camp affects the physical and emotional quality of life of residents (N=5), often related to documentation issues (N=2) - “I think you also see that now impacting people's mental health that have stayed here so long. Because there's also new arrivals now coming, and some of them are very lucky, and they get a positive decision after one or two months (...) But there's people that will be out after half a year, and they've been here three years, four years, whatever, and you see those people coming all the time after you, and leaving straight away” (Sonia). So how refugees feel depends on how long they have been in the camp (N=8) - “I know I was talking with someone that has been in camp for, like, six or seven years, and (...) he was just feeling really depressed about life,”, “The waiting, the uncertainty, not knowing when they will ever get their

passport" (Joyce), "a month is a long time. It's a long time. It's meant to be two or three days, so anyone who stays here, I'd say, more than two to four weeks, it's not their quality of life. It's already decreasing because they're here" (Daniel). Thus, the longer they stay in the camp, the more helpless and abandoned they feel (N=1), the timeless nature of the camp exacerbates people's mental state, leaving them "stuck" in limbo (N=5) "But I think a lot of the, a lot of the, and also like, like just being stuck in camp for a year and having nothing to do obviously is just a really, it's really bad for your mental state. You'll, it's really hard not to get depressed, because you need something to live for. So that is definitely all tied together" (Clare). Uncertainty about the future (N=6) negatively affects mental health - "There is no no future in a way, I've heard so many different stories of people in camps people say "we become stupid because there is just nothing for us to do, it's like my brain is stopping", people used to be mechanics, people used to have jobs, that they knew how to work they say I don't know anything anymore because I'm just sitting here nothing is changing and then so in that way it's just very hard" (Samuel); "I talk to other people who are like, "I just don't have the headspace to do anything, because my whole procedure and all the insecurity is just killing me". So I feel like the core kind of (...) this high level of insecurity and how it... But their coping mechanism is different. It freezes some, and others it makes them hyperproductive, just because they know if they will sit still for five minutes. They start thinking, and it just goes downhill from there" (Sonia). Refugees expect to build a better life for themselves in the future, they have hopes and dreams (N=4) the same will happen when they leave the camp (N=2), in Europe (N=7), especially in Germany (N=7) - "because somehow they have the impression that Germany wants them (...) And a lot of them have friends or family over there, so that makes it easier for them to pick Germany as a country to go to" (Joyce). They expect to return to a normal life (N=2) - "I think they are expecting to just have a normal life again and be treated like a citizen" (Sabrina), through residence in a safe place (N=2), where they can "getting work, getting a house, reunited with their families, getting paid, providing for themselves" (Miranda) (N=3). It is also mentioned that many of them actually want to leave Greece (N=3).

However, there is also a very negative view of the future, that is, without prospects (N=3), without hope (N=3) - "So there are people who are really negative and they say we'll never get out of here" (Samuel). It is also mentioned that they do not always have a realistic view of what leaving the camp and their future will be like (N=7), because they will have to start the entire asylum process again in the country they will be integrating into (N=7) - "I think not all of them do realize that they have to start the whole process again, like asking for asylum in another country, like the Netherlands or France or whatever" (Joyce). The issue of unrealistic expectations is also mentioned, for example, people end up in Athens and wind up living on the streets (N=2). Participants understand the importance of having hope, even if it is unrealistic (N=3) - "where they have to depend on hope because it's, they have nothing else" (Kathy), overall, expectations about the future depend on the status of the person's

asylum application (N=2) - "if they have four rejections, they expect to be deported, back to their country of origin. What until now never happened in Greece, but they expect it. So they have low expectations" (Marga). The lack of control and decision-making power in the camp also affects their well-being (N=5), even the fact that they live in an unwanted camp impacts them, with food being one of the most frequently cited examples (N=5) - "I think it's also super, especially for, like, many of those people come from a country where food is such a big part of their culture and their identity, and I think that one of the, it's such a dehumanizing, degrading thing that we're doing by giving them this food (...) I think in an environment where already so much is decided for you, and then also you not being able to decide what you're feeding your family for the night. Yeah, I just cannot imagine how that is" (Sonia), "I don't know if this is, like, an emotion, but, like, a lack of control, almost. I don't know how to, like, put that within an emotional word. But, like, they don't have control really over where they live. They don't have control over their asylum. They don't really have control over what clothes they get. They don't have..." (Lisa). Several participants mentioned that giving people within the camp the power to choose is something that should be improved (N=7). The awareness that they are dependent on others (N=2) leads to despair, self-harm (N=2), and suicide attempts (N=1) - "Also there have been moments it's been like they would come to Eurorelief and say "if you don't help me now I'm going to cut myself and hurt myself", this happens but it's more self harm is more often in their own rooms they would cut themselves, be grounded in a way and just know that they know" (Samuel). As well as the restriction on freedom of movement that characterizes their life in the field (N=1) - "I think the biggest or the poorest thing about the quality is also the insecurity. People just don't know what is happening to them. You're literally waiting. Will that be a month? Will that be half a year? Will that be... so I think the insecurity level also makes it... And then, like I say, you see many people make the best out of it, but I can also really imagine that if the insecurity level is so high, that really messes with your head, which makes you unable to learn a language or learn a skill or anything" (Sonia). Prolonged stay in the camp is also related to delays in the asylum process (N=4), where the fact that it is faster or slower will have an impact - "I know people from Afghanistan who are here 6-7 months without knowing anything no decision nothing and now they got positive decisions, they see a bit of a way forward they know it's still going to take a while, but they see that this will end but for people who don't see an end it's just a very very bad place and there used to be nothing" (Samuel).

- Relationships

POCs and Locals

The relations between POCs and Greek locals is seen as poor (N=8) - "the locals don't love having the refugees here" (Candice)(N=5). Although there is a sense of solidarity among locals (N=4), the most notable issues are discriminatory behavior (N=2), racism (N=5), and the refusal to provide certain

services to refugees (N=3). This less positive relationship began in the past while they were still in Moria (N=8) - "there were so many people in Old Camp, like 20,000 people at one point, and... Like, it just feels a little scary to think that, like, the population in Camp Moria was bigger than the population of Moria Village" (Candice), where there were situations of tension (N=3), insecurity (N=1), theft (N=4), the main means of subsistence, tourism, was affected (N=4). Although at the beginning of the refugee crisis it was the locals who helped the people arriving on the island (N=5) - "at first, when the crisis first started, like, it was the great people who kept people and, like, gave them things, met them, and helped them" (Candice), participants understand the frustration of the locals regarding the situation as a whole (N=6), with the greatest frustration directed at national and European governments rather than refugees (N=2). Currently, the relationship is better than it was before (N=5), although it is characterized by a "fragile balance" (Nina) - "I think the majority accepts them, but it is not that they really want to help them, or that they really understand the situation. And then there is also still a lot of people that really are against refugees, that really would want their camps to be closed, that really are full of hate and anger" (Tina).

NGO and different entities

NGOs provide various responses (N=6) and establish relationships with different groups and entities. They are seen as bridges between refugees and authorities (N = 1), and their relationships with authorities are ones of trust and support (N=2). As previously mentioned, the relationship between the local population and the refugees is not the most positive, this is where NGOs have a fundamental role to play, both inside and outside the camp, in building bridges (N=1), treating locals with respect (N=1) - "If we are respecting that, they notice" (Clare), Even when the locals are against volunteers working in the camp, they understand that the volunteers are helping, so they end up encouraging more people to come to the island (N=2). The relationship between refugees and NGOs is described as positive (N=14) – with residents expressing admiration, recognition, and gratitude for the work of NGOs (N=3), and NGOs that respect refugees (N=2), sometimes considered a friendship (N=4). This relationship also has some associated issues, as it depends on the NGO (N=6), since there are different NGOs with different responsibilities and different impacts on the lives of camp residents (N=5) - "you have organizations that are dealing with housing, for example. And it is not always fun to listen to them or to work with them. But if you have an NGO that is focused on activities, then you only have good experiences because it is only fun activities" (Miriam), It may also have an unbalanced character, which must be avoided (N=1) - "There's a power imbalance of, like... Me, personally, don't have the authority to house you or not, but it's perceived like, oh, I can house you in a different place if you're my friend. You know? And so I think that's where it gets a little bit iffy" (Lisa). Volunteers and humanitarian workers respect residents, and vice versa, so the relationship is viewed as positive (N=6).

Community volunteers, who are camp residents that volunteer for NGOs, are viewed positively and help build respect (N=3) - So the connection between refugees and volunteers, I think it is really well. Especially if organizations choose to do more together with refugees. So if they are volunteering for Movements on the Ground or if they are helping BRF, then it helps them to respect them" (Miriam).

NGO and Government

NGOs play a very important role in the camp, but there is also a strong prospect of collaborating with the Greek government (N=11), with this cooperation between NGOs and the Greek government ensuring various services in the camp - in the areas of shelter (N=5), cleaning (N=1), education (N=4), organizing food (N=5), health (N=3). Greater intervention and involvement by the Greek government in the Lesvos refugee camp has allowed for better access to services inside and outside the camp, for example, cleaning services, electricity, and education are now provided by the Greek government, rather than NGOs.

One issue that has emerged is the management of cleaning services - "So I think like cleanliness is so much improved" (Marga), where the cleaning team ensures the cleaning of toilets, showers, and garbage collection (N=9). Cleaning is ensured daily (N=7) by IFS, a company contracted by the Greek government (N=8), where the work they do is widely recognized (N=11) - "I'm really impressed by it. Because like, they do a really good job" (Marielle), in addition, cleaning teams have good relationships with POCs (N=1).

NGOs were the first entities to act in the Lesvos refugee crisis, and they played a fundamental role (N=1) - "I think also what happened on Lesbos is a rather exceptional reaction to a humanitarian crisis. Mostly if something like this occurs, you first have the big actors going, and then small NGOs will fill up the gaps, but here there were already so many NGOs on the ground, and then the big actors came, and the NGOs basically were like, "no, no, we already got it". Which is, to a humanitarian crisis, that's a very uncommon response" (Sonia), currently, they continue to cover the fact that the government is limited in its intervention (N=2) - "The government is limited in what it can do, and I think there's a lot of NGOs that are willing to cover gaps. And the government is willing to let them cover the gaps" (Daniel). The dynamic of government and NGOs working together is seen as an added value (N=3) - "I think it's better to have both. I think if it's only government, then you have dispassionate people working, and maybe they care, maybe they don't care about their job, you know? It's just a paycheck, maybe (...) I think NGOs get their legitimacy from the government, and the government lets them in" (Daniel), also pointed out as a job that is done in balance (N=2) - "it's, like, all about those relationships that you build then with, like, the government officials. And, like, if you can maintain and upkeep those relationships, then it works well, but it has to also be, like, a balance. It has to be a give and take. It can't just be, like, I have to just do whatever, like, the government says. Yeah, so it's a balance" (Lisa).

Although relations are improving daily, some feel that NGOs are gradually reducing their involvement (N=2) - "So government is doing more and more, and NGOs are pulling back more and more, what I've seen in the past month" (Nina), this is seen as a positive because the government is taking on more responsibility, however, there is a downside: the government is not acting out of passion for the people, but rather out of obligation (N=3) - "I think it's good because it's the government's task, and right now they kind of do have the capacity to do it themselves again. So then when they can, I think they should. So partially I think it's a good thing. On the other hand, um...the Greek government is...very done with refugees. They take care of the refugees because they have to, like, the EU forces them (...) And NGOs often are there with... With... Like, a passion, compassion, love for the people. What I sometimes miss in the Greeks" (Nina) that is why it is important to have NGOs and volunteers working in the camp, as they bring compassion to their work with people living in camp (N=1). In short, a good relationship between the government and NGOs allows for mutual assistance and collaboration, consequently, there is less suffering and greater balance - "in the end of the day we are still depending on the Greek authorities. If they would say "you have to leave camp", we have to leave camp. So I think a good relationship with the Greek, the government in camp, the offices that facilitate traveling, for example, for refugees, the police, the doctors, the Greek lawyers. And we need it too. And they need to see that we are really wanting to help them as well and that we need them for our work and that we want to be with them" (Miriam), "So I think one thing I noticed is that, like, the government finances are limited, the number of staff they have are limited, the amount of stuff the staff can do is limited, and when there's a gap, we would fill the gap in, but we shouldn't. I think always it should be, sometimes the government should do that, but they can't. But if we do it, then it's easier for them to not do it if they don't take responsibility. So we're always in this tension, but I think if we don't do it and they don't do it, then we see suffering that is not necessary, so then we decide to do it. So it's a good thing. When neither does it, it's not us, it's not the government that suffers, it's the residents of the camp. And usually we're here specifically to help there be less suffering" (Daniel).

POCs and police and authorities

The relationship that refugees have with the police is also due to their past experiences with this entity before or during their time in the camp (N=6) - "I think it really depends on the person what experiences they have had with the police. And also, like, maybe not just here in camp, but also like previous interactions, like maybe in one of the countries they were fleeing through (...) If they have that perspective that the police are just out to hurt them or whatever, to catch them. So there have been times, even in camp, where actions were made that were maybe not correct. The wrong people were blamed and, or it seems like the police didn't care. And so they kind of lost their trust" (Clare), as well as depending on what type of authority they are dealing with (N=1) - "if you are pushed back by

the Greek coast guard, then this relationship is messed up. But if you were helped by a police officer, then your relationship is better” (Miriam). As with other issues, the perception of police presence and resulting sense of security varies by area and by the people in each area (N=5) - “I can imagine that some of the single men don't feel comfortable with police, you know, because maybe their neighbor has been stealing things and then the police just comes in during the night, opens every room, you know, I can imagine that that really makes you feel insecure. Whereas maybe a single woman who is in an RHU finds it very comforting to see the police patrolling around every night” (Sonia), where the Blue Zone feels safer due to a greater police presence (N=2) and the yellow zone feels less safe (N=2). There is a perception among people within the camp that they are not protected by the police (N=8) – “if they have a problem during the evening or during the night and if they call the police, they don't always come. Even if they hear something going on” (Miriam), they do not feel listened to (N=5), there is no trust (N=3), there is fear (N=4), because when they act, they do so in a violent/aggressive/offensive way (N=3), and in a racist way (N=1). On the other hand, some argue that people are not actually afraid of the police (N=7), they do not feel that it is an entity that helps them (N=8) - they not easily reach out to the police for help or whatever. I think they rather and easier or more quicker go to either like Eurorelief for all kind of questions, or maybe the UNHCR” (Joyce), they normally only get involved in extreme situations (N=3). On the other hand, the police are seen as a positive presence in the camp (N=7), participants stated that they feel the camp is safer due to the increased police presence (N=13) - “there is a lot more presence of police in this camp and more what I heard which is it helps for safety in a way or having more feel of safety” (Samuel), what for some may be a negative aspect (N=1) - “because it makes it feel more like a prison” (Daniel), for others is seen as something positive (N=4) - “but you can really tell, especially vulnerable people, that they feel more free here than they did, or more safe, so I think it's, there's always a good and bad with increased police presence” (Daniel), being an entity that protects them and quickly stops fights (N=3), although it needed to be more active in the camp (N=4). The decrease in thefts is associated with an increased police presence and a greater sense of security (N=1) - “there's not that much "Alibaba", and I think it's also so much safer, because of the presence of the police” (Joyce), their presence on the camp being essential (N=2). There is also the prospect that the police treat them with dignity (N=2) - “But I have also seen, like, from my perspective, I have, you know, had to involve police in situations. And I have seen some police that really did care, and they do want to treat these people with dignity” (Clare), although this is a minority view within the camp. Participants had some difficulty in accurately defining the relationship that the police have with refugees and what perspective is associated with the feeling of safety, because “depends on the person and situation” (Joanne) (N=4).

Refugees' relationship with the Greek authorities is described as a “power grab” (N=2), discriminatory (N=1), submissive (N=1), and hostile (N=1) - “I think it's not a very good relationship

because the refugees see the government as, like, they are the ones that need to give me my future, basically, like, the positive decision comes from the government, which is true, I think they are right” (Nina), where refugees blame Greek authorities for the uncertainty they experience within the camp (N=6), making the relationship somewhat negative (N=6).

- **Asylum process**

When asked about the asylum process within the camp, participants mentioned that people receive information about their rights (N=6) and asylum process when they arrive at the camp (N=6) from legal actors and lawyers (N=5), the UNHCR (N=3), and support from the Social Care Team (N=4). However, it appears that they do not always receive sufficient information about the asylum process or the interview (N=7), sometimes, they do not receive any information at all (N=3), this is partly because the outcome depends on the lawyer handling the case (N = 8), which cannot always be guaranteed (N=3) - “some lawyers go with them to the interview, are there for them and other ones just do a quick session and then say good luck. So that's the difference that there is” (Annika), and the existence of translation (N=4) - “If they ask for translation, they will not give translation” (Miriam). It is also mentioned that people often do not know what to expect regarding their asylum process when they arrive, which sometimes makes the process confusing (N=5). The interviews are managed by EASO (N=4), with a police officer, a psychologist, a lawyer, and a translator (N=6) present. The asylum interview is called “the admissibility interview” (Marga) (N=2) mostly based on getting an answer to the question “why they’re not safe in Turkey?” and it is important that POCs know how to answer this question (N=4) - “pre-interview is about the question are you not safe in Turkey and why not. If this is approved, so if they say, of course, okay, you are not safe in Turkey, then they go to the big interview” (Miriam). However, not all people are asked this question about Turkey, only five nationalities are required to do so (N=2) - “Sudan, Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia, and one more, Syria” (Marga), “And the people who don’t, are not in these five countries, they go to the big interview immediately. So they don’t have to prove, like Eritreans, they don’t have to prove this Turkey thing, because it was not written in the Turkey deal. So it’s written by law that these countries have to do this before” (Miriam). Many people are rejected almost automatically because they do not know that they have to answer this question about Turkey (N=2), this means that the asylum process varies depending on nationality (N=1). If the decision is a rejection, they have 30 days to reapply (N=2), after four rejections, they must pay €100 per person to try again for asylum (N=4). Participants also mentioned that, although they threaten to deport people who are rejected, they actually do not deport them (N=4). In addition, participants report people's asylum status also affects the type of access they have to services, for example, access to food (N=8) - “many people have learned how to style up the food that they are given (...) But then, on the other hand, if you're, like, if you have so many rejections, and you don't

reopen your case, and you don't get cash assistance, there's literally nothing for you to buy anything from" (Sonia).

In Moria, it used to take about a year to get the first interview (N=2), but now the process is faster (N=5). Although speed is a positive aspect, it is also viewed negatively because it prevents them from adequately preparing for the interviews (N=7) - "But now I think they make it so quick to make it more difficult for the people to prepare for their interview. Nobody can reach the people when they're in the quarantine area (...) So the lawyers also don't have time to really prepare them. So the reason why, nobody knows, but it really looks like they want to make it difficult for people" (Miriam). Even so, participants indicate that the asylum process should be improved to make it even faster and clearer (N=3).

- **Future for the camp**

When participants were asked about the possibility of closing the current camp, different perspectives emerged. Among them were those who thought it would happen (N=8), as well as those who think that this current camp will not be closed (N=5), due to the resistance that the locals have shown to opening more camps (n=2), as well as the continued approval of projects and activities within the current camp (N=3) - "They are already saying this from one and a half years ago. They are putting a lot of money into new structures, isolating projects, building new toiletries. So, if they would really think to close this soon it would be quite stupid, to invest so much money in the new... Spend a lot of money for nothing" (Miriam).

The Samos camp is considered by the participants to be a prison (N=7) - "It really looks like a prison. Because with high fences, barbed wire, and when you go, just like on the airport, you are going through, your bags are checked. And it is hidden, it is far away from the local people" (Joyce), because it is a very closed and controlled space (N=8) - "to go in an outside camp, they need to use a fingerprint" (Joanne) - in a fairly isolated area (N=5) - "in Samos it's the worst, because it's in the middle of the island. In the middle of nowhere. No bus connection. They have to walk for two hours to go to the city" (Tessa). Participants have mixed opinions about the opening of the new camp (N=6), the camp will offer better conditions (N=6), but more isolated, without easy access to services (N=2) - "if they build the new camp, it will not really... It maybe will improve the conditions, but not really the life of the refugees. It will more... Maybe it will look better on the paper, but it will not actually be better. Because then it will just create different kind of struggles for the people that live there. Obviously, it sounds better if just one family lives in a container that has a toilet and a kitchen, but then if this camp is so far away from everything else, then it's also not better" (Tina), with a negative impact on people's mental health (N=2), but they acknowledge that it is a camp with better structural conditions (N=9). There are also participants who like the idea of the Samos camp because it has different community areas and activities (N=2), a clean camp, but it was very white and lacked color (N=1) - "The camp is

also clean, but it is also very sterile, everything is white” (Joyce). One criticism is that the improvements and changes are based on the isolation of the camps and offer little opportunity for inclusion in Greek society (N=1) - “They are not allowed or expected to have access to the town (...) I could see that Greece would be within its rights basically to choose to be like we want you in a safe and good place away from civilization (...) At the end of the day, Greece said it would provide shelter and asylum, but it never said that it would allow them straight into civilization, straight into Greek community right away (...) you could just create a secluded community” (Kathy).

Participants recognize that there are improvements and interventions that cannot be made because this camp is temporary (N=5), requiring that realistic and achievable changes be kept in mind as a priority - “It's never been allowed to connect the whole camp to the Greek because it's a temporary camp. And because of this, it's always always temporary, temporary, it should be temporary. That's why to this day, it's called temporary camp. And so anything that looks like it's for good, they refuse. Any proposal that feels like you cannot, even a structure or something, it needs to be able to be dissembled (...) they won't spend any more money here. They've basically said that” (Kathy), “we need to keep in mind that this is temporary. All these things, it's like they are unrealistic expectations that we have and then realistic ones. And so as much as we want these, we need to start with what's realistic to get to this” (Sabrina). However, there are still possible improvements that do not require financial investment, for example, as moving from the Yellow Zone to the Red Zone (N=1) - “it's our last final call to put the yellow into red, because there's no money attached. It would just be a yes” (Kathy).

- **Moria refugee camp**

Participants were asked which field POCs prefer to live in (Moria or Mavrovouni) and clearly state that POCs prefer to live in their current camp rather than in Old Moria (N=9). When asked what allowed for better conditions between one field and another, participants mentioned that because there are fewer people in the camp (N=3), which allows for a camp with better conditions (N=4), and greater involvement by the Greek government, with some policies even changing, one of which is the promise that there will be no unaccompanied minors in this camp and, in fact, since Moria burned down, no unaccompanied minors have been placed in the camp again (N=1). Participants were asked to describe the Moria camp, some said that “Nothing is worse than Moria” (Daniel), is characterized as chaotic (N=2), messy (N=2), and depressing (N=1), because they had to stand in the food line for several hours a day (N=5), because of situations of sexual violence (N=2), violence (N=4), a lot of fights (N=3), lack of police (N=2), unsanitary (N=6) and “there were a lot of rats” (Joyce) (N=3). Characterized as unsafe (N=6), especially at night (N=3) where “every night people would expect to be stabbed” (Kathy). People's lives were characterized as “daily life of just surviving” (Joyce) (N=3), described as hell (N=3)

- "Welcome to Hell" (Kathy). Spatially, the Moria camp is described as "it was also in a prison situation" (Joyce), where spatial and service organization was almost non-existent (N=2), with limited toilets and showers (N=4) - "200 people for one toilet" (Kathy) - without any kind of decent housing structure (N=5) - "People were also making their own structures just out of pallets" (Joyce) - and the same structure was shared by several people (N=8) - "we would say 16 people in a UN tent would be good for four families of four" (Kathy). When people arrived at the camp, they had to try to find somewhere to put up their tents (N=2), but with insufficient space, people began to settle outside the camp boundaries, in the Olive Grove (N=4)/jungle (N=1). The camp was also described as having a human spirit and a spirit of improvement through trade structures (N=5) - "same time there was something really beautiful about the human spirit that was there. And I saw in the year I worked there, for a year before it burned down, that there was a spirit of wanting to improve your situation. So people created kiosks and they would sell food, and they would take food and sell it, or they would make a deal with a local Greek farmer and they would sell raw vegetables or whatever" (Daniel), although it operated on the black market (N=2). This is a very positive point about Moria in relation to Mavrovouni (N=2), which does not exist in the current camp because they do not want any resemblance to what Moria was. The work of NGOs involved trying to house the people who arrived (N=2), and as a constantly insufficient response, with very sporadic activities (N=3). There are even two participants who state "it was understandable that at a certain time they set the camp on fire because they didn't see no way out of this bad situation" (Joyce). All the chaos we were experiencing was justified because it was an emergency situation (N=2) - "there was no way of developing anything because we were dealing with the emergency right now, so nothing was moving to make anything better, so that's why it just kept getting worse, because there was no time in between to make it better" (Sabrina). Human rights were not protected and trauma developed (N=3) - "It was not meeting any humanitarian standards" (Tina), "if Turkey and Afghanistan weren't their trauma, Moria probably was their trauma" (Kathy). But above all, the Moria camp is characterized as overcrowded (N=6) - "camp could house a maximum of 3,000 people, and at a certain time there were 20,000 people" (Joyce), not very central and accessible (N=7), and compared to the current camp, the smaller number of people in the camp is related to improved living conditions and infrastructure (N=8), with an impact at various levels - "It's not so overcrowded (...) not having so many people and not being overcrowded, like that inherently improves the education, the improves the housing, that improves activities, that improves so many things when there's not as many people" (Lisa), "The fewer numbers here is a reflection of the government policy to move people on quicker. So that's I think, a very positive change" (Daniel), promoting better living conditions in camp - "Whereas before, when there's 12,000, 8,000 people, how can you create activities? You can't. And so yeah, I think a huge benefit of camp getting smaller is being able to hopefully increase the people's quality of life" (Lisa). Examples of the impact of fewer people on the

camp include: more comfort at Rubb Halls, because it is not overcrowded; better flexibility for entering and leaving the camp (N=2); better healthcare (N=2) - "there's a quite high number of medical actors compared to the number of refugees that are still here. Whereas, you know it used to be when there were 20,000 people, they couldn't see all patients, I think now they're in a spot where they can basically see all patients" (Sonia); community engagement is an improvement because there are fewer people on the camp (N=1); better relationship between POCs and locals (N=2); reduction in waiting times for access to services, particularly access to the food line (N=3) - "the food line I think is one example that it's more human kind of compared to Moria" (Annika); better access to education (N=3) - "When we had 7000 people, not everyone can go to school. Now there's many organizations, so now it's not that bad. 7000 or 20000 people, not everyone can go to school" (Tessa); improvement in people's mental health (N=1); better preparation of people for the asylum interview (N=2) - "I think the old camp there were a lot of NGOs and the government was just a overwhelmed by the huge amount of refugees that they couldn't handle it (...) also because the numbers are dropping so drastically (...) I think the collaboration is getting better and better. The government, of course, was already involved, but they're doing a better job right now, like with OIM, the Office of Migration, and of course you have UNHCR" (Joyce).

Compared to Moria, which should never have happened (N=2) - "Moria was the worst, yeah. I think any other would be a improvement because it couldn't get worse" (Annika) - participants report the current camp has better living conditions and better satisfaction of basic needs (N=8) - "Like, the people that have been in Moria often think better about this camp than people who haven't been in Moria" (Nina), "Nobody would say "oh yeah, this is a good camp, life is goos here, I'm so happy that I am in this camp", nobody would ever say that. Like toy see them as like "Wow, it's so much better now" but (...) they still see all the other problems that still exist" (Tina) - however, it remains a refugee camp (N=2), a poor place to live (N=3) - "I see they're really working on structure and working on ways and they want to listen to make things so organizational as they want to work, you see other NGOs that are really pushing to change things and you see change being implemented, but still I think it's a very poor place to live " (Samuel), where problems persist.

Throughout the interview, participants tended to classify the Mavrovouni camp by comparing it to the Moria camp (N=5) - "Of course I want to say very poor because I completely don't agree like with how people are living here. But if you compare it to Moria, I would say poor, because I think Moria was like the whole next level of how people live" (Miranda), "in the back of my head I have Moria" (Annika).

3.2 Discussion of Results

Living conditions in the Mavrovouni camp are inhumane

The findings of this dissertation suggest that the living conditions in the Mavrovouni camp are inhumane. Regarding life in refugee camps, we found evidence of poor quality of life and living conditions, previous studies of refugee camps also show this (Basheti et al., 2015; Moreira et al., 2019; Reis, 2020).

According to Jacobs (1961), quoted by AlWaer et al. (2023, p.126), “The spatial development of refugee camps is an example of organized complexity where there is no single factor which, if understood, explains all”. Considering the importance of exploring the evolution of conditions in the refugee camp, as “Refugees’ camps are mostly established in “Extemporaneous manner” which means that they are designed without appropriate preparation, focusing on the emergency situation and keeps fastened to it” (Alshoubaki, 2017, p.6), the location of the camp is perceived as having decent pros and cons. The cons are mostly negative due to climate issues affecting well-being and the camp's proximity to the sea, which is associated with the trauma of the journey the refugees took to the island. Additionally, the central location allows contact with the local community, which is not viewed positively due to the strained relationship between locals and residents since the time of the Moria camp. Despite the locals' solidarity, participation, and support, the relationship became negative due to shared experiences. As Turner (2015) points out, camps are often located far from cities, which is not the case with this camp. However, as the same author points out, even camps located near cities are well defined in relation to those that belong to them “the inside and the outside”. On the other hand, a central location allows for greater independence in daily life and easier access to services.

The housing structure of the refugee camp, with its different areas and housing unit organizations, has a significant impact on people's lives. There are three distinct housing structures that directly affect the quality of life of residents, with Rubb Halls being associated with the worst living conditions. The dynamics of different housing structures also include access to electricity, this is generally considered one of the worst aspects of life in the camp. Most residents have restricted daily access to electricity, which limits their daily activities and quality of life. Regarding the issue of food within the camp, the perspective of food distributed on the food line is very negative (Refugee Support Aegean (n.d.)), with a lack of quality and variety leading to the need for many people to cook their own food. On the other hand, access to food distributed by NGOs inside and outside the camp is mentioned, as are specific cases of vulnerability and certain health conditions. While living in a large camp improves people's quality of life, the truth is that the camp lacks services adapted to these cases.

There is also a relationship between camp conditions and the physical and psychological well-being of refugees, and previous research on refugee camps has documented the main emotions and symptoms that refugees experience (Basheti et al., 2015; Moreira et al., 2019; Reis, 2020) such as anger, depression, state of trauma, stress, frustration, hopelessness and happiness. Physical symptoms associated with psychological symptoms are also mentioned, particularly sleep problems experienced in the camp (Basheti et al., 2015; Moreira et al., 2019). Participants feel that refugees need to numb their feelings by using drugs and alcohol. Other feelings experienced include feeling no meaning in life and feeling that being in a state of happiness is a requirement in order to be able to deal with everything. The camp, which should provide stability and security, especially for those who arrived in traumatic situations due to their journey to the camp (Moreira et al., 2020), makes them more sensitive and susceptible to the camp environment, aggravating their weakened mental state. They are unable to process their traumas, which accumulate and worsen, initiating new trauma. Developing activities plays a significant role in managing stress, depression, and mental health issues within the camp.

NGOs play a key role in providing services inside and outside the Lesvos refugee camp

NGOs play a very important role inside and outside the Lesvos refugee camp. They provide various services and, although the Greek government has become more involved, NGOs continue to play an important role in areas where the government does not provide services. In addition to responding to cases of vulnerability, an example of this is access to education, inside the camp, NGOs provide non-formal education, and a Greek school in Mytilene provides formal education outside the camp. Thus, all children have access to education, whether formal or informal, where the major change in the camp is the encouragement of attending Greek schools. However, since families are resistant to sending their children to Greek public schools, it is important to maintain informal education within the camp. Non-formal education began to emerge in the camp to provide an educational response where currently only NGOs provide various educational responses. These responses include mother-toddler classes, for children up to six years old, there is also an outreach program, for families who do not want their children to attend formal or informal school, and adults in the camp also have the opportunity to access education through spaces created by NGOs. Camps are not only places of protection for those in need, but they are also places of opportunity, where the education and training offered are opportunities given to people living in the camps, as well as a strategy for dealing with feelings of uncertainty about the future (Moreira et al., 2020; Mocheche, 2021). Another example of the fundamental role of NGOs is access to healthcare. There is access to health services within the camp, and the medical staff is considered quite good and proactive. NGOs operate within the camp, and the Greek response is also present.

Thus, NGOs play an important role in providing services and establishing relationships with different groups and entities. They are seen as bridges in the relationships established between refugees and authorities. As previously mentioned, the relationship between locals and refugees is not positive. This is where NGOs play a fundamental role in building bridges, both inside and outside the camp. Even when locals are against volunteers working in the camp, NGOs understand that their help encourages more people to come to the island (Jansen, 2025). The relationship between refugees and NGOs is positive, where community volunteers are viewed positively and help build respect. NGOs play a very important role in the camp, and there is also a strong prospect of joint work with the Greek government. This cooperation ensures various services in the camp, with greater intervention and involvement by the Greek government in the Lesvos refugee camp has allowed for better access to services inside and outside the camp. For example, the government now provides cleaning services, electricity, and education. Responsibilities and work that were previously the responsibility of NGOs are now being returned to the Greek government. One issue is the cleaning services, which are provided daily by a company contracted by the Greek government. It is interesting to note the perspective also offered by Bousiou (2020) on NGOs as entities that first began to act in the refugee crisis in Lesvos and how they were fundamental and currently, they continue to cover responses that the government is limited in its intervention (Jansen, 2023). The dynamic of government and NGOs working together is seen as an added value, allows for mutual assistance and collaboration, and consequently less suffering for people and greater balance.

Life in the Lesvos refugee camp promotes feelings of insecurity

Regarding the feeling of insecurity within the camp, several points intersect on this issue. Situations of insecurity in the camp can be caused by substance abuse, alcohol, and drugs, which is pointed out as a way of coping with reality and traumatic experiences. In addition, situations of sexual abuse, violence (Moreira et al., 2020) and theft are a reality experienced in the camp. As with other aspects of life in refugee camps, it can be observed that the sense of security within the camp varies depending on the accommodation structures and areas of the camp, with the most unsafe situations occurring mainly in the Yellow Zone. As in studies conducted (Pérez-Sales et al., 2022) the women being the group that feels least safe, especially in relation to sexual abuse. Afternoon is the least safe time of day, and the fact that people cannot lock their doors exacerbates the situation.

In addition, the environment surrounding the accommodation also influences their sense of security, especially the neighbors. Thus, Sense of Community promotes a feeling of security and support within the refugee camp in Lesvos, described as a strong relationship established through organization into communities, nationalities and neighbors. Another positive issue raised in relation to the sense of community is the “community leaders”, allowing communities to have a voice within the

camp. On the other hand there is also the view that sense community sometimes brings more tension to the camp, can also lead to conflicts and dangerous situations for those who are different from that community, racism exists between groups and nationalities, It is noted that those who do not have this sense of community, who do not belong to a group, end up feeling more depressed and lonely.

The feeling of safety in the camp is also related to the relationship that refugees have with the police. Consistent with the findings made by Schneider, et al. (2017), the relationship refugees have with the police is also due to past experiences with this entity, before or during their time in the camp. As with other issues already presented, the perception of police presence, and the resulting sense of security in the camp, varies according to what type of authority they are dealing with and the areas and the people of each area. There is a perception among people within the camp that they do not feel listened to and there is fear. On the other hand, there is also the view that people do not actually feel afraid of the police, but as Schneider, et al. (2017) also point out, they do not feel that it is an entity that helps them. Finally, the police are seen as having a positive presence in the camp, with participants stating that they feel the camp is safer due to the greater police presence.

However, the existence of security and strict control of space does not make people feel safer in the Lesvos camp. Thus, both the presence of the police in the camp and the strict control of entry and exit do not prevent horrible situations from happening. Entry and exit to the camp are controlled through the main gate is seen as something negative, a mechanism characterized by causing a feeling of life in prison/jail and dehumanizing. Just as Bousiou (2020) described the gradual transformation of Lesbos from a transit space to a “prison island,” with this closure and isolation aggravating reception conditions and even inadequate access to international protection. This dynamic has a major impact on people’s lives, as they are limited in the space where they live although participants understand the reason for the control and its existence, even recognizing it as something good for the protection of people but even so, situations that cause insecurity happen on the camp. Thus, the importance of the camp being a space where people feel free with ample space and less control over entry and exit, provides a greater sense of freedom and lessens the feeling of living in a prison.

Improving the physical structure of a camp does not mean that the camp will guarantee a better quality of life for people, and this issue is related to the fact that the Greek government has announced that it will close some refugee camps, including Mavrovouni, and replace them with new camps, like the one on Samos. The new camp, called Lesvos Closed Controlled Access Center (CCC) with a capacity of 5,000 people, will be in Vastria, 30 km from the town of Mytilene, in the middle of forest (Tsitsaraki & Petraco, 2023), and findings suggest this new camp is not seen as positive. The Samos camp is considered to be a prison (Al Jazeera, 2023; International Rescue Committee, n.d) because it is a very closed and controlled space, in a fairly isolated area. Participants are divided on what they think about the opening of the new camp, as it will be a space with better conditions, but more isolated, without

easy access to services with a negative impact on people's mental health, but they recognize that it is a camp with better structural conditions. The Greek Council for Refugees and Oxfam (Al Jazeera, 2023) have expressed concern about the people and human rights of those living in the Samos camp. One criticism raised concerns that the improvements and changes made are based on the isolation of the camps, with little possibility of inclusion in Greek society.

A prolonged stay in the Lesvos refugee camp creates uncertainty

Prolonged stay in the Lesvos refugee camp affects the physical and emotional quality of life of residents, often related to documentation issues. It should be noted that how refugees feel depends on how long they have been in the camp. Thus, the longer they remain in the camp, the more they develop a sense of helplessness and abandonment. In fact, as Turner (2015) points out, camps are by definition temporary, but they end up existing between the temporary and the permanent, both for those who establish them and for those who live in them. Thus, the timeless nature of the camp provokes and aggravates people's mental state, leaving them “stuck” in this limbo. Uncertainty about the future (Moreira et al. 2020) impacts people's mental health. In fact, based on the participants' interactions with the POCs, it is clear that they expect to build a better life for themselves in the future in Europe, outside of the camp. They also expect to return to normal life. However, there is also a very negative view of the future, that is, without prospects or unrealistic expectations about leaving the camp and their future. As previously studied by Bjertrup, et al. (2018), refugees' lack of control and decision-making/choice power within the camp affects their well-being. Thus, giving people within the camp the power to choose is mentioned by several participants as something that should be improved. Related to this issue is also the fact that they are dependent on others and lack autonomy. The uncertainty of life in the camp and the dependence they feel affects the refugees' relationship with the Greek authorities, blaming them for the uncertainty in which they live turning the relationship into something negative described as a “power grab”, discriminatory and hostile.

Prolonged stay in the camp is also related to delays in the asylum process, where the fact that it is faster or slower will have an impact. In addition, people's asylum status also affects the type of access they have to services. When they arrive at the camp, people receive information about their rights and their asylum process, however, it appears that they do not always receive sufficient information about the asylum process and the interview. The asylum interview is called “the admissibility interview”, mostly based on getting an answer to the question “why they're not safe in Turkey?” and it is important that POCs know how to answer this question - only five nationalities are required to answer, meaning that there are different approaches to the asylum process depending on nationality. In Moria, it used to take about a year to get the first interview, but now the process is faster. Although speed is a positive aspect, it is also seen as negative because it does not allow them to prepare as well for the interviews.

Fewer people in the Lesvos refugee camp lead to better living conditions

It should be noted that throughout the interview participants tend to classify the camp by comparing it to the camp of Moria. When comparing one camp with another (Moria and Mavrovouni), participants clearly state that POCs prefer to live in their current camp rather than in Old Moria, but what has changed to justify this perspective, both among POCs and participants?

Several themes and issues are raised that show that living conditions in the refugee camps on Lesvos have improved in terms of structure and services, mainly because there are fewer people in the camp, which allows for a camp with better conditions and greater involvement by the Greek government. Nine of the twenty-two participants also worked at the old Lesvos Moria camp, and even those who did not work at Moria are aware of what the camp was like through the testimonies of POCs, contact with other workers, or through the media. Moria is characterized as chaotic, depressing and unsafe, where people's lives were characterized as hell, and these dynamics also being explored by Tsitsaraki & Petracou (2023), Al Jazeera (2020), Moreira, et al. (2020) and Zamanian (2019), the last one focused on violence and racist issues experienced in the camp. Spatially, the Moria camp is described with almost non-existent of spatial and service organization. Despite all the negative issues, the camp was also described as having a human spirit and a spirit of improvement through trade structures. Compared to the current camp, the smaller number of people in the camp is related to improved living conditions and infrastructure, with an impact at various levels, promoting better living conditions in camp - examples of the impact of fewer people on the camp include more comfort at Rubb Halls, because it housing structure; better healthcare; reduction in waiting times for access to services; better access to education; improvement in people's mental health; better preparation of people for the asylum interview. In fact, when Moreira et al. (2020, p. 103) studied the conditions at the Moria camp and noted that in order to improve living conditions at the camp, it would be necessary to "the number of residents inside the camps should be drastically reduced and overcrowding should end. This should require fundamental changes in current European asylum policies in order to speed up the processing of asylum policies in order to speed up the processing of asylum applications and promote a fair and adequate share of responsibilities between European member-states" and it is possible to see that the smaller number of people in the camp has improved some of the living conditions of the people in the camp.

In fact, compared to Moria the current camp has better living conditions and better satisfaction of basic needs, however, it remains a refugee camp, a poor place to live where problems persist. As Büschi (2022) points out, despite all the improvements mentioned, it is precisely because of the persistence of some problems that the Lesvos refugee camp still has room for improvement. It was in this sense that this study explored with participants what could still be done in the future to improve living conditions in the camp. However, it is interesting to note that participants recognize that there

are improvements and interventions to do, for example, complete housing structures with full access to electricity; improved access to mental health care within the camp; more training opportunities. However, that cannot be done because this camp is temporary. And that, regardless of the improvements that may be made, refugee camps should not exist, considering all that has been revealed in this investigation and in past studies (Harrell-Bond, 1998; Agier, 2016).

Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the conditions and quality of life in the Lesvos refugee camp, as well as how these have evolved in the context of the Greek island. While studying the literature on this subject, the researcher realized the importance of further investigating refugee camps in Greece and gathering more information and data. The existing literature portrays the degradation and horror that the Lesvos camps are known and depicted for, and this research was conducted based on the existing literature on the subject but challenging itself to explore the existence of different perspectives. Through interviews with humanitarian workers and volunteers working in the camp, it was possible to gain access to a detailed description of the functioning, services, and dynamics in the camp, in which the perspectives are in line with the existing literature, although they also bring some other interesting perspectives to consider.

Regarding the first and second objectives of the research— explore the living conditions in refugee camp in Lesvos and how these conditions affect the lives of those who live there —both for participants and according to the literature (Moreira et al., 2019), the camp is perceived as a place with undignified and inhumane conditions. Issues such as security, with its various associated dynamics, affect the well-being and quality of life of people within the camp who experience different dynamics of danger; different accommodation structures have different impacts, such as access to electricity. Although there are options that allow for greater comfort, there is no accommodation structure that dignifies people's access to services is not always easy, especially for vulnerable cases. The narratives presented about the location and asylum process are not consensual among camp participants. The issue of how mental health deteriorates within refugee camps and the relationship between camp conditions and the physical and psychological well-being of refugees is considered one of the topics on which there is greatest consensus among participants, together with perceptions in academic circles (Basheti et al., 2015; Moreira et al., 2019; Reis, 2020), highlighting the fact that the camp environment aggravates their already weakened mental state, and they are unable to begin to process their traumas, which only end up accumulating.

Taking into account the third objective of the research— examine the improvements and evolution of living conditions in the camps on the island of Lesvos, the reasons behind them, and the deficiencies that still prevail in each camp – it is possible to see that there have been improvements, for example cleaning services, access to education, and access to healthcare, but that these improvements are also the result of the involvement and dynamics created over time by NGOs inside and outside the camp, greater involvement by the Greek government, and mainly because there are fewer people in the camp. This understanding of the role of NGOs in the context of refugee camps is

in line with academic studies (Bousiou, 2020; Jansen, 2023), highlighting the coordination with government entities in order to ensure improvements in the aid provided. The analysis also revealed the participants' consensus on the importance of having fewer people in the camp as a guarantee of better living conditions, functioning, and service provision. Therefore, it can be concluded that although improvements in the camp are possible, the main obstacle to ensuring better conditions is the fact that the camp is temporary. The temporary nature of the camp perpetuates a mindset that interventions are neither necessary nor possible because it is not a long-term, permanent space, although existing literature shows that camps are increasingly becoming permanent cities (Turner, 2015). And because they are becoming permanent cities, they allow people to stay in the camp indefinitely, which is also associated with delays in the asylum process, causing uncertainty about life and the future for those who live there. Thus, associated with issues of mental health and quality of life within the camp, the camp promotes a feeling of uncertainty, limitation of people's power of choice, of difficulty in planning their future, allowing other problems and dynamics to arise in the lives of those who live in these places.

According to the results, it is possible to see that structural conditions in the camp have improved compared to the Moria camp, largely due to the smaller number of people in the camp, although there are still serious issues within the camp, such as the sense of security, mental health deterioration, and poor housing structures. The results suggest that the main factors contributing to the impediment of better living conditions are the prolonged stay in the camp and the indefinite asylum process. The future plan cannot involve transforming the camps into even more closed spaces, where human rights violations continue and which lead to social exclusion and worsening mental health. It is concluded that improvements in camp conditions are possible, but that the focus should be on humanizing the way refugees are viewed and dignifying their lives by eliminating refugee camps.

The researcher hopes that this study will be useful for debate between the emerging themes of this study and the contributions of other authors. Despite the limitations of this study, it is hoped that it will encourage other researchers to further investigate conditions in refugee camps, using larger and more diverse samples. Future research could include: research on EU policies that allow for the continuation and opening of new refugee camps; Analysis of asylum policies that allow for the prolonged stay of refugees within the camp; How prolonged experience in a camp in Lesvos affects refugees' narratives of identity; Research on the impact that life in refugee camps has on the worsening and emergence of trauma.

As recommendations for public policies to be implemented/considered, reference is made to the: Closure of refugee camps, with the suggestion of creating dignified resettlement programs with different EU countries; Changing European asylum policies in order to speed up the asylum process (but with adequate guarantees of legal support), making the stay in the camp as short as possible;

Guaranteeing complete housing structures in the camp; Guaranteeing psychological support for all residents, with a specific focus on developing strategies to support situations of trauma and Promotion of professional training and access to the labor market and volunteering for refugees in camp.

This investigation concludes with a brief reflection from the researcher, since the researcher conducted fieldwork and volunteer work for three months in the Lesvos refugee camp (Mavrovouni). When the researcher arrived at the Mavrovouni camp, she was confronted with new emotions, reality, and doubts about the development of the investigation. What had previously been testimonies and news images became real and palpable.

The camp, as a space for research, presented several challenges for the researcher, who experienced questions and moments of uncertainty about the conduct of the research, requiring constant reflection and consideration in order to conduct the research in an assertive and ethical manner.

It was in this process of fieldwork, carried out simultaneously with the research work, that the lines of assertiveness were drawn – where the researcher understood the value of the role and process of research that allows useful, albeit always incomplete, knowledge to be produced.

Bibliography

- Agier, M. (2016). *Borderlands: Towards an Anthropology of the Cosmopolitan Condition*. Polity Press.
- Alshoubaki, H. (2017). The Temporary City: the Transformation of Refugee Camps from fields of Tents to Permanent Cities. *Housing Policies and Urban Economics*, 7, 5 – 15. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335161295> The Temporary City the Transformation of Refugee Camps from fields of Tents to Permanent Cities
- AlWaer, H., Sibley, M., & Cooper, I. (2023). Design and use of space in refugee camps: a case study of a contested terrain. *Urban Design and Planning*, 176 (3), 123–141. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370169343> The design and use of space in refugee camps a case study of a contested terrain
- Amer, Z. A. (1989). An Overview of Social Conditions in the Refugee Camps. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2 (1), 149-151.
- Aradau, C. (2016). Political grammars of mobility, security and subjectivity. *Mobilities*, 11(4), 564-574.
- Balibar, É. (2002). *Politics and the Other Scene*. Verso.
- Barnett, M., & Weiss, T. G. (2008). *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*. Cornell University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt7v7ms>
- Basheti, I., Qunaibi, E., & Malas, R. (2015). Psychological Impact of Life as Refugees: A Pilot Study on a Syrian Camp in Jordan. *Tropical Journal of Pharmaceutical Research*, 14(9), 1695-1701. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283672461> Psychological Impact of Life as Refugees A Pilot Study on a Syrian Camp in Jordan
- Betts, A., & Collier, P. (2017). *Refuge: Transforming a Broken Refugee System*. Penguin Random House.
- Bousiou, A. (2020). From Humanitarian Crisis Management to Prison Island: Implementing the European Asylum Regime at the Border Island of Lesbos 2015-2017. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 22 (3), 431-447.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4^a ed). Oxford University Press.
- Cantat, C. (2018). *The politics of refugee solidarity in Greece: Bordered identities and political mobilization*. Center for Policy Studies.
- Castañeda, H., Holmes, S. M., Kallius, A., & Monterescu, D. (2016). *Refugees and immigrants. Anthropology and human displacement: Mobilities, ex/inclusions, and activism*. American Ethnologist - Refugees and im/migrants, p. 1-12.
- Costa, B. F., & Teles, G. (2017). A Política de Acolhimento de Refugiados – Considerações sobre o caso Português. *REMHU*, 25, (51), 29-46).
- Crawley, H., & Skleparis, D. (2018). Refugees, migrants, neither, both: Categorical fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's "migration crisis". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44 (1), 48-64. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1348224?needAccess=true>
- Cresswell, T. (2006). *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. Routledge.
- Fotaki, M. (2021). Solidarity in crisis? Community responses to refugees and forced migrants in the Greek islands. *Organization*, 29 (2), 295-323. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/13505084211051048>
- Global Humanitarian Assistance. (2017). *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report*. Development Initiatives.
- Greg, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. Sage.
- Haferlach, L., & Kurban, D. (2017). Lessons Learnt from the EU-Turkey Refugee Agreement in Guiding EU Migration Partnerships with Origin and Transit Countries. *Global Policy*, 8 (4), 85-93.
- Harrell-Bond, B. (1986). *Imposing Aid, Emergency Assistance to Refugees*. Oxford University Press
- Harrell-Bond, B. (1998). Camps: literature review. *Forced migration review*, 2, 22-23. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285668696> Camps Literature review

- Jahre, M., Kembro, J., Adjahossou, A., & Altay, N. (2018). Approaches to the design of refugee camps: An empirical study in Kenya, Ethiopia, Greece, and Turkey. *Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management*, 8 (3), 323-345.
- Janmyr, M. (2012). *Protecting Civilians in Refugee Camps: Unable and Unwilling States, UNHCR and International Responsibility (Vol. 1)*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Jansen, B. J. (2025). The humanitarian border as a violence-producing environment: revisiting aid and anti-migration protests on Lesbos, Greece. *Disasters*, 49 (2), 1-15.
- Løvåsen, H. M. (2017). *With a desire to help - A case study about Lesbos* [Master's Thesis]. University of Agder. <https://uia.brage.unit.no/uia-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2493192/UT-505%20L%C3%B8v%C3%A5sen%20Hege%20Merete.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Loescher, G. (2021). *Refugees: A Very Short Introduction*. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Malpique, R. L. (2018). *Crise de Refugiados: o Acolhimento de Refugiados na União Europeia- uma análise crítica (2011-2016)* [Master's Thesis]. Universidade Católica Portuguesa. [file:///C:/Users/joana/Downloads/content%20\(11\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/joana/Downloads/content%20(11).pdf)
- Mocheche, L. K. (2021). *The Role of Education in Refugee Integration and Well-being, A case Study of Kakuma Refugee Camp (Kenya)* [Master's Thesis]. Norwegian University of Life Sciences.
- Moreira, A. L., Barbosa, M., Maia, M., Veiga, E., Martins, F., & Santos, M. (2020). Lives on Hold: The experiences of asylum seekers in Moria Refugee Camp. *Community Psychology in Global Perspective*, 6 (1), 92-107. [file:///C:/Users/joana/Downloads/content%20\(12\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/joana/Downloads/content%20(12).pdf)
- OIM. (2009). *Direito Internacional da Migração: Glossário sobre Migração (Nº22)*. Organização Internacional para as Migrações.
- Panebianco, S. (2016). *The Mare Nostrum Operation and the SAR approach: the Italian response to address the Mediterranean migration crisis*. University of Catania. file:///C:/Users/joana/Downloads/panebianco_EUMedEA_JMWP_03-2016.pdf
- Pérez-Sales, P., Galán-Santamarina, A., Zunzunegui, M. V., & López-Martin, S. (2022). Refugee Camps as Torturing Environments—An Analysis of the Conditions in the Moria Reception Center (Greece) Based on the Torturing Environment Scale. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, 19 (16), 1-15.
- Pérouse de Montclos, M-A., & Kagwanja, P. M. (2000). Refugee Camps or Cities? The Socio-economic Dynamics of the Dadaab and Kakuma Camps in Northern Kenya. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13 (2), 205-222. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/31149535_Refugee_Camps_or_Cities_The_Socio-Economic_Dynamics_of_the_Dadaab_and_Kakuma_Camps_in_Northern_Kenya
- Pulla, V., & Dahal, P. (2015). Life in Refugee Camps. In V. Pulla (Ed.), *The Lhotsampa People of Bhutan, Resilience and Survival* (pp. 31-45). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Reis, M. C. (2020). *Hope(lessness): The perceived psychological impact of living in a refugee camp* [Master's thesis]. Universidade e Lisboa – Faculdade de Psicologia. <https://repositorio.ulisboa.pt/entities/publication/b26f94e3-328d-4061-b07c-1e681b89e15e>
- Santinho, M. C. (2011). *Refugiados e Requerentes de Asilo em Portugal: contornos políticos no campo da saúde* [Doctoral dissertation]. ISCTE. In Teses 48, dezembro 2016. Lisboa: Alto-Comissariado para as Migrações. https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt/bitstream/10071/15564/1/Tese48_paginacao_06_lr.pdf
- Siegel, D. (2021). 'The 'Crises' of Lesbos. *Utrecht Law Review*, 17(4), 10–18. <https://utrechtlawreview.org/articles/745/files/submission/proof/745-1-2552-1-10-20220215.pdf>
- Norwegian Refugee Council (2008). *The camp management toolkit*. The Camp Management Project. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/camp-management-toolkit-0>
- Tsitsaraki, P., & Petracou, E. (2023). Making of a border island: The example of Lesbos. *European Journal of Geography*, 14 (1), 11-20. <file:///C:/Users/User/Desktop/RESULTADOS/document.pdf>
- Turner, S. (2016). What Is a Refugee Camp? Explorations of the Limits and Effects of the Camp. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 29 (2), 139-148. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304171270_What_Is_a_Refugee_Camp_Explorations_of_the_Limits_and_Effects_of_the_Camp

- Schneider, T., Shraiky, J., Wofford, D., & Awad, R. (2017). Cultural and Structural Violence in the Lives of Syrian Refugees. *Journal Of Health And Human Experience*, 3 (2). 65-86. <file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/CulturalandStructuralViolenceintheLivesofSyrianRefugees.pdf>
- SEF/GEPF. (2019). *Relatório de Imigração, Fronteiras e Asilo 2018*. Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras.
- UNHCR. (2005). *An Introduction to International Protection*. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4214cb4f2.html>
- UNHCR. (2022). *Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2021*. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-trends-report-2021>
- UNHCR. (n.d.a). *Figures at a Glance*. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance>
- Voulgaris, D., & Meli, G. (2018, abril 12-15). *Spatial structures and the future of refugee camps in Lesvos (Greece)* [Conference]. 11th International Conference of the Hellenic Geographical Society, Lavrio, Greece.
- Walford, G. (2009). The practice of writing ethnographic fieldnotes. *Ethnography and Education*, 4 (2), 117-130. <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/reae20/4/2?nav=toCList>
- Zamanian, P. (2019). *The Refugee Crisis and Structural Violence The Case of Lesvos* [Master's thesis]. Åbo Akademi University, Finland. https://www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/169502/zamanian_paniz.pdf
- Zarro, S. M. D. (2017). *Perspetivas de Integração por parte de Refugiados numa comunidade do Litoral de Portugal* [Master's thesis]. Instituto Politécnico de Leiria. <https://iconline.ipleiria.pt/bitstream/10400.8/3020/1/DissertacaoMestradoSusa naZarro.pdf>

Sitography

- Al Jazeera. (2020). *Remember the refugees stuck in the hell that is Moria*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/3/5/remember-the-refugees-stuck-in-the-hell-that-is-moria>
- Al Jazeera. (2023). *EU details violations at Greece's 'model' refugee camps*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/5/11/eu-details-alleged-violations-at-greeces-model-refugee-camps>
- Amnistia Internacional. (2014, october). *Itália: pôr fim à operação de busca e salvamento MareNostrum "colocaria vidas em risco"*. <https://www.amnistia.pt/italia-por-fim-a-operacao-de-busca-e-salvamento-mare-nostrum-colocaria-vidas-em-risco/>
- CNN. (2020, setembro 10). *Fire ravages Europe's largest migrant camp on Lesbos*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/09/09/europe/greece-lesbos-fires-intl/index.html>
- Deutsche Welle. (2020, january). *Lesbos: 'We want our island back'*. <https://www.dw.com/en/lesbos-we-want-our-island-back/a-52151318>
- Diário de Notícias. (2018, july). *Crise, Refugiados e Incêndios. As três tragédias gregas*. <https://www.dn.pt/mundo/crise-refugiados-e-incendios-as-tres-tragedias-gregas-9634150.html>
- European Commission. (2019, december). *Resettlement: EU Member States' pledges exceed 30,000 places for 2020*. https://portugal.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/estados-membros-da-ue-comprometem-se-acolher-mais-de-30-000-refugiados-em-2020-2019-12-19_pt
- European Commission. (n.d.). *Relocation: EU solidarity in practice*. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/migration-management/relocation-eu-solidarity-practice_en#:~:text=In%202015%2C%20the%20EU%20launched%20an%20emergency%20relocation,number%20of%20migrant%20arrivals%20across%20the%20Mediterranean%20Sea
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (2020, june). *AIDA 2019 Update:Greece*. <https://ecre.org/aida-2019-update-greece/>
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (2021, june). *AIDA 2020 Update: Greece*. <https://ecre.org/aida-2020-update-greece/#:~:text=The%20updated%20AIDA%20Country%20Report%20on%20Greece%20provides,seekers%20and%20content%20of%20international%20protection%20in%202020>
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (2022, june). *AIDA 2021 Update: Greece*. <https://ecre.org/aida-2021-update-greece/#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20a%20total%20of%209%2C157%20refugees%20and,from%20Afghanistan%20%2820.2%25%29%2C%20Somalia%20%2819.9%25%29%20and%20Palestine%20%2815.3%25%29>
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (2023, june). *2022 Update AIDA Country Report: Greece*. <https://ecre.org/2022-update-aida-country-report-greece/#:~:text=At%20least%2018%2C780%20refugees%20and%20migrants%20arrived%20in,that%20continued%20to%20be%20systematically%20reported%20in%202022>.
- Frydenlund. E., & Diaz, L. (2018, june 8). *This is Moria....The Migrationist*. <https://themigrationist.wordpress.com/2018/06/08/this-is-moria/>
- Human Rights Watch. (2016, november). *EU Policies Put Refugees At Risk, An Agenda to Restore Protection*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/23/eu-policies-put-refugees-risk>
- InfoMigrants. (2020, october). *Moria 2.0: The new Lesbos refugee camp*. <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/27851/moria-20-the-new-lesbos-refugee-camp>
- InfoMigrants. (2021, december). *2,200 migrants still suffering on Lesbos – MSF*. <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/37033/2200-migrants-still-suffering-on-lesbos--msf>
- International Rescue Committee. (n.d.). *One year since Greece opened new "prison-like" refugee camps, NGOs call for a more humane approach*. <https://www.rescue.org/eu/statement/one-year-greece-opened-new-prison-refugee-camps-ngos-call-more-humane-approach>

- Lusa. (2021, february). *Grécia vai encerrar campo de refugiados de Lesbos*. <https://rr.sapo.pt/noticia/mundo/2021/02/25/grecia-vai-encerrar-campo-de-refugiados-de-lesbos/228236/>
- Open Society Foundations. (2020, january). *Q&A: Forging a Bond between Locals and Refugees*. <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/q-and-a-forging-a-bond-between-locals-and-refugees>
- Oxfam. (2021, april). *Closure of model camp on Greek islands amidst horrific living conditions is cause for concern*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/closure-model-camp-greek-islands-amidst-horrific-living-conditions-cause-concern>
- Refugee Support Aegean. (2021, april). *Another dignified reception facility shut down*. <https://rsaegean.org/en/another-dignified-reception-facility-shut-down/>
- Refugee Support Aegean. (n.d.). *What is happening today in the refugee structure on the Aegean islands*. <https://rsaegean.org/en/lesvos-2023/#:~:text=It%20began%20its%20operation%20as%20a%20Temporary%20Accommodation,Reception%20and%20Identification%20Centre%20of%20Mytilini%20%28RIC%20Lesvos%29>
- The Guardian. (2020a, february). *A doctor's story: inside the "living hell" of Moria refugee camp*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/09/moria-refugee-camp-doctors-story-lesbos-greece?CentralAsia>
- The Guardian. (2020b, february). *Migrants aren't spreading coronavirus – but nationalists are blaming them anyway*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/28/coronavirus-outbreak-migrants-blamed-italy-matteo-salvini-marine-le-pen>
- United Nations. (n.d.a). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- United Nations. (n.d.b). *Unterm*. <https://unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/view/UNHQ/3A1E2D143FC1B0EA85256A0000077A1F>
- UNHCR. (2017, may). *Aegean Island Factsheet*. <file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/58265.pdf>
- UNHCR. (2019, september). *Aegean Islands Monthly Snapshot*. file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/GRC_AegeanIslands_MonthlySnapshot_20190930.pdf
- UNHCR. (2020, june). *Aegean Islands Weekly Snapshot*. file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/GRC_AegeanIslands_WeeklySnapshot_20200628.pdf
- UNHCR. (2021, august). *Aegean Islands Weekly Snapshot*. file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/GRC_AegeanIslands_WeeklySnapshot_20210815.pdf
- UNHCR. (2023, december). *Aegean Islands Weekly Snapshot*. file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Aegean_Islands_Snapshots_20231203_EN.pdf
- UNHCR. (n.d.b). *Refugee Housing Unit*. <https://emergency.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Refugee%20Housing%20Unit%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>
- UNHCR. (n.d.c). *The 1951 Refugee Convention*. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/1951-refugee-convention>

Attachments

Attachment A. Interview script

	Topics	Questions
0.	Biographical data	Nationality Sex Age Educational level What is your profession What language/s do you speak
1.	Introduction	When did you arrive to Lesvos? How long are you staying? This is your first time here? What is your job here? Have you ever been in other refugee camp or other humanitarian action fields? Have you ever been at Moria? Why did you decided to a be a volunteer? What were your motivations?
2.	Refugee camp conditions and Shelter	How would you describe the camp? What do you think about the structure and the organization of the camp? 1 – very poor 2 – poor 3 – neither poor nor good 4 – good 5 – very good What do you think about the location of the camp? 1 – very poor 2 – poor 3 – neither poor nor good 4 – good 5 – very good How are camp cleaning services provided? (toilet cleaning, garbage collection) What access to education do children have? How are the electricity conditions in the camp? Do all spaces have electricity during all day long? How does the camp structure(containers, mobility in the camp, gates, access to services) impact the life of refugees?
3.	Food and Water	Is food distribution done every day? Do all residents receive food? Does the food come in quality and quantity? 1 – not at all 2 – a little 3 – a moderate amount 4 – very much 5 – a lot People cook their own food? 1 – not at all 2 – a little 3 – a moderate amount 4 – very much 5 – a lot

		Is there a lack of access to water? And drinking water?
4.	Security and Police	<p>Do you think the people feel safe inside the camp? And specific inside their room/container?</p> <p>1 – not at all 2 – a little 3 – a moderate amount 4 – very much 5 – a lot</p> <p>Are there many situations of theft, violence and sexual abuse? Does the population have a general fear of the police, or do they feel that it is an entity that protects them? How is the entry and exit control of the camp?</p>
5.	Refugee Feelings	<p>In your interactions with refugees, what do they tell you about the life in the camp?</p> <p>How do you rate the quality of life of refugees in the camp?</p> <p>1 – very poor 2 – poor 3 – neither poor nor good 4 – good 5 – very good</p> <p>How safe they feel in their daily life? Is the sense of community something positive within the camps? What are refugee's expectations about the future?</p>
6.	Health and psychological well-being	<p>How do you rate the access of refugees to medical services?</p> <p>1 – very poor 2 – poor 3 – neither poor nor good 4 – good 5 – very good</p> <p>Which are the main emotions and symptoms refugee show? Can you describe, in your point of view, the relationship between the conditions in the camp and the psychological wellbeing of refugees?</p>
7.	Legal Process and access of information	<p>Do the people receive information about their rights in the camp?</p> <p>Are the people informed about them asylum process, what documents are assigned and how long it will last? Is this information enough to prepare them to the big interview? How are interviews managed and by whom? When there is some kind of rejection what are the consequences?</p>
8.	Authorities and Greek government	<p>Do you know if are most services provided within the camp are provided by NGOs or government? Can you describe the different entities within the camp and what their responsibilities are? In your opinion is there any evolution in terms of policies applied in the camp in the last 1/3 years?</p> <p>How would you describe the relationships inside the camp between refugees and communities, NGO, volunteers, locals, and authorities?</p>

9.	New camp vs Old camp	<p>Do you think the people prefer living in the old or new camp? 1-Old 2-New Why?</p> <p>How you describe the camp of Moria? How would you describe the situation of the refugees in Moria? How do you characterize the organization of the Mavrovouni camp, compared to the organization of the Moria camp? (the physical space, the social space)</p> <p>Do you agree that the refugees living in the current Lesvos camp experience “good” conditions in the camp and the fulfillment of basic needs, such as feelings of security and protection, and the refugees who lived in Moria lived in precarious conditions in the camp, causing a lack of satisfaction of basic needs and lack of security and protection? Did the new camp change anything in their daily life? What? Do you think that what the Greek government promised would change/improve in the Moria 2.0 camp actually happened/is happening?</p>
10.	Future	<p>What do you think could be done in the future to improve living conditions in the camps? The Greek government last year announced that it would close several refugee camps in Greece, including the Mavrovouni camp. Do you think this will happen? At the same time, the Greek government announced that they will open 5 new camps, similar to the Samos camp. Do you think that they will be camps with better conditions?</p>
11.	Reflection	<p>What are the positive/good and negative/bad things about the camp and life of refugees at camp? And about your experience working at the camp?</p>
12.	Conclusion	Do you have something else that you’d like to share?

Attachment B. Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

The present study is part of a research project taking place at **ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa**. The study aims to investigate the narratives and perspectives of aid workers and volunteers on the living conditions of refugees in refugee camp in Greece.

The study is carried out by Débora Santos (dbsss@iscte-iul.pt), who you can contact if you want to clarify a doubt or share a comment.

Your participation in the study, which will be highly valued as it will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field of science, consists of participating in an interview with an expected duration of one hour/one and half hours. There are no expected significant risks associated with participating in the study.

Participation in the study is strictly **voluntary**: you are freely choose to participate or not to participate. If you have chosen to participate, you may discontinue participation at any time without giving any reason. In addition to being voluntary, participation is also **anonymous and confidential**. The data obtained are for statistical treatment only and no responses will be analyzed or reported individually. At no point in the study do you need to identify yourself.

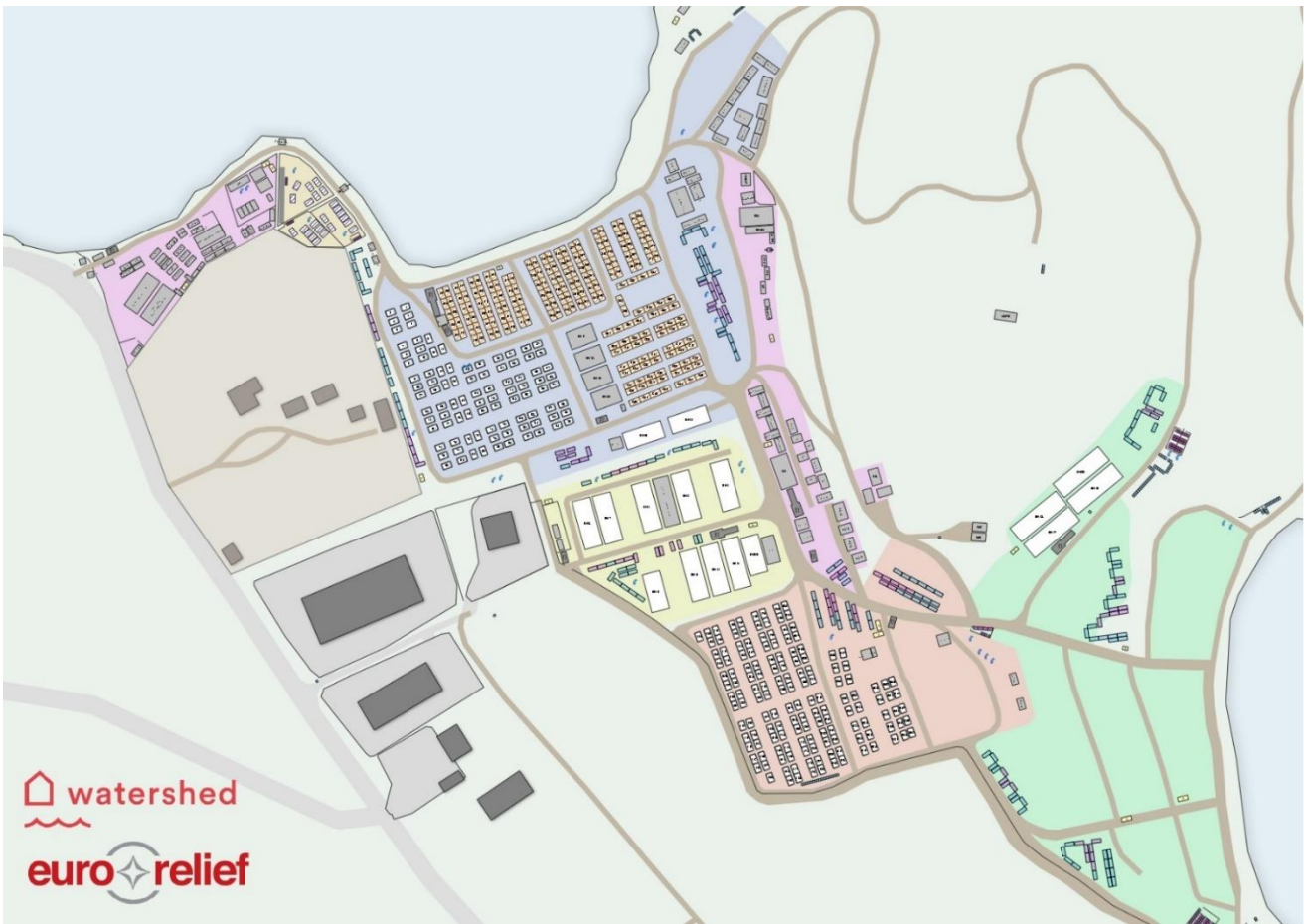
I declare that I have understood the objectives of what was proposed and explained to me by the researcher, that I have been given the opportunity to ask all questions about the present study and that I have obtained an enlightening answer for all of them, for which I **accept** participate in it.

_____ (local), / / (data)

Name:

Signature: _____

Attachment C. RIC Mavrovouni Refugee Camp Map



Note. © 2022 Eurorelief, all rights reserved

Attachment D. Housing structure, RHU in Blue Zone and Red Zone



Source: own elaboration, fieldwork photos

Attachment E. Housing structure, ISObox in Blue Zone



Source: own elaboration, fieldwork photos

Attachment F. Housing structure, RubbHalls in Yellow Zone



Source: own elaboration, fieldwork photos

Attachment G. Overview of the Mavrovouni refugee camp



Source: own elaboration, fieldwork photos

Attachment H. Fieldwork in with Diapers and Free Hygiene Shop



Source: own elaboration, fieldwork photos