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Rupture and Continuity: Positioning Hungarian Border Policy in the European Union

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Abstract[1]

In this article, I locate the efforts of the Hungarian government to close its borders to migrants in the broader context of externalization of European Union asylum policy. I draw on Martina Tazzioli's conceptualization of the production of temporary, divisive migrant multiplicities in border zones in ethnographically presenting the conditions of two protest marches of migrants. I suggest that the relative successes and failures of these marches, one of which resulted in a temporary rupture in Hungary's adherence to EU border policy, relate to the presence or absence of biopolitical border controls and techniques of externalization that stand in parallel with long-term developments of EU border control. In this context, I also question the extent to which an emergence of a collective subject is contingent upon local support, on one hand, and imaginations of the border, on the other. I argue that the analysis of Hungarian state's border control, as well as efforts to counter it, must be situated in the historical development of the EU border policy.

Keywords: borders, European Union, Hungary, migration, refugees, autonomy of migration.

1. Introduction

The Hungarian border policy of deterring migrants must necessarily be located in the wider context of the European Union border regime. In this paper, I question the assumption, as expressed in international media, and by several politicians and policymakers, that the changes in the Hungarian government's asylum strategy in 2015 and 2016 constitute an aberration from the European Union asylum policy.[2] Rather, they are an expression of the logic of externalization of EU border control, meaning political and spatial measures that extend EU border policy, surveillance and control to third countries, thereby fundamentally limiting people's access to asylum procedures in the EU (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009; Andrijasevic, 2010; Casas Cortes et. al., 2015). I suggest that Hungary's strategy, manifested by the construction of legal and physical border fences that result in pushbacks to Serbia and in the blanket rejection of asylum applications based on safe third country regulations, is a continuation of EU policies of restricting access to asylum through similar measures of externalization, gaining a particular regional expression (Boswell, 2003).

In locating a temporary rupture in this continuity of Hungarian border policy with EU border control, I draw on Martina Tazzioli's conceptualization of the generation of temporary, migrant multiplicities in border zones (2016). For Tazzioli, these easily divided migrant multiplicities are produced by bordering techniques, and are decidedly distinct from other migrant communities. They are brought together by biopolitical techniques including visualizations portraying migrants as a spectacle, data that presents virtual representations of multiplicity, and migrants' temporary spatial proximity as a result of border controls. Thus, temporary migrant multiplicities need to be looked at somewhat separately from wider collective migrant subjectivity. The temporary aspect renders migrant multiplicities divisive, as the spatial proximity is underscored by the individualized asylum procedure, as manifested at the Hungarian-Serbian border.

I suggest that a temporary rupture in Hungary's continuity with EU border policy emerged when the Hungarian government organized transportation of migrants[3] through its territory to the Austrian border in autumn 2015. I ethnographically investigate the events that led to this rupture, when a week-long protest of migrants at the Keleti railway station in Budapest, led to a 'march of hope' from Keleti to Vienna. I explore the conditions that allowed migrants to override the individualizing nature of multiplicity, and emerge as a collective subject that succeeded in pressuring the Hungarian government to disregard the Dublin regulation. After this first march of hope, the Hungarian government solidified techniques of border control in the so-called 'transit zone', the border area surrounding the fence on the southern, Serbian border. These techniques, such as safe third country regulations,

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[2] See, for instance, the call of the foreign minister of Luxemburg to expel Hungary from EU for hostility towards refugees (Weaver and Kingsley, 2016). Also, in public debates in the Hungarian media, many have expressed the government's anti-refugee stance to be a deviance from the 'European' norm, with opposition parties campaigning against Viktor Orbán with a rhetoric of 'staying' in Europe. For a legal account, see Nagy 2016.

[3] In most cases, I refer to people on the move with the word 'migrant', although on some occasions when relying on legal discussions and sources, I also refer to 'asylum seekers' or 'refugees'. For a nuanced discussion on these categories, see Apostolova 2015.

represent a continuation of EU border controls, and resulted in the failure of another march of hope from Belgrade to the Hungarian border. Of these two marches as acts of citizenship (Isin and Nielsen, 2008), the first one emerged in the absence of individualizing effects of a biopolitical border, and met its immediate goal of opening the Austrian border to a group of migrants. The second march, meeting the border control processes at the transit zone, failed exactly at the same purpose on the Hungarian border. These different outcomes, I suggest, relate to expressions of EU border control externalization during the time between the two marches, that challenge the emergence of migrant multiplicities as collective political subjects in the Serbian-Hungarian border zone (Tazzioli, 2016). These expressions, I suggest in the second part of the article, are historically anchored in longer term developments in EU border policy and the role of East-Central Europe therein.

2. The context: the long summer of migration

The events of 'the long summer of migration' in 2015 have warranted much attention by migration scholars across the disciplinary spectrum. Authors have explored migrants' protest movements and activists supporting them (Atac et. al., 2016; Atac, 2016; Ikizoglu Erenzu, 2016; Stierl, 2016), as well as long-term existing structures of solidarity (Rozakou, 2012; 2016). Holmes & Castañeda (2016) have looked at the representation of the 'crisis', while the emergence of migration and asylum in Europe as a 'hot' topic of research has been criticized (Cabot, 2016; see also Papataxiarchis, 2016). Conceptually, I locate my contribution to the emerging body of critical migration research that has documented the productive and counterproductive nature of the European border regime, which by attempting to curb irregularity by externalization instead generates undocumented mobility and precarious labour (Hess, 2010; Andersson, 2014; 2016). Looking at the emergence individual and collective migrant subjectivity in the framework of longer developments of EU border control, I join contributions that explore avenues for the possibility of autonomy of migration (Papadopolous et al., 2008; Casas Cortes et al., 2015; Scheel, 2013). Advocates of autonomy of migration, often like myself embedded in the scholar-activist nexus (Kasparek and Speer, 2013), focus on the agency, adaptability, force and resourcefulness of migration that respond to attempts to curb it. In relation to the Hungarian border controls, I am curious about manifestations of autonomy by collective subjects or singular, individual choices of people. I locate these efforts towards autonomy in the empirical and historical context of Hungary's position in the EU border policy architecture. Having in the 1990s acted as a buffer zone itself, Hungary occupies a strategic position in the Balkan route, bordering Austria to the west and Serbia to the South. This geopolitical position means embeddedness in the European Union border regime and the Schengen zone, on one hand, and in the transitory dynamics of the Balkan Route, on the other. In advancing an aggressive form of border control and an eagerness to 'protect' the European Union from migrants, the Hungarian government has strategically capitalized on its geopolitical position, portraying itself as a proud and tough Eastern European leader who has a 'historical responsibility' to protect Europe, unlike liberal and multicultural policymakers in Brussels (Magyar Kormány, 2016c).

In attempting to understand the success of one march and the failure of the other, I discuss legal measures undertaken by the Hungarian government in 2015-16, which in turn bear similarities to older mechanisms of EU border control externalization. To this end, I resurface older scholarly work on how East-Central Europe itself functioned as a buffer zone for externalizing EU border controls in the 1990s. Indeed, there are remarkable similarities between current deterrence mechanisms in Eastern and Southern Europe with those adopted previously in Western and Northern Europe. As with the other new member states of the EU, also the development of the Hungarian asylum policy was inevitably contingent upon the development of the European border regime, and adhering to the constantly developing EU asylum *acquis* constituted a pre-condition for the postsocialist countries to join the European Union in the 2000s. Analysts have remarked on the paradoxical adoption of the asylum *acquis*, including expectations of new member states to receive large numbers of asylum seekers but work with a legislation that is essentially targeted at keeping them at bay (Lavenex, 1999; Nancheva, 2015). I argue that the Hungarian border policy is a continuation of the logic of externalization, and creates temporary migrant multiplicities in border zones. Although migrant multiplicities, as conceptualized by Tazzioli, carry potential of autonomously subverting border controls, they are easily fragmented by biopolitical border control, as in the case of the second march of hope.

Recognizing these dynamics, I refrain from sketching the Hungarian 'case' at first, followed by the European 'context', because the two are chronologically and contextually interwoven and interlinked. I will, however, begin the story from the end, with two ethnographic vignettes that speak to the broader developments of the Hungarian and EU asylum policy and the consequences thereof. The first vignette looks at the march of hope from Budapest to Vienna in September 2015. Following the event, the term march of hope became emblematic of migrants' acts of citizenship, and was used later to describe other marches, e.g. on the Greek-Macedonian border in March 2016, and Serbian-Hungarian border in July 2016. The second vignette fast-forwards to summer 2016 and this second march of hope from Belgrade to the Hungarian border. I suggest that the different outcomes relate to divisive border controls implemented by the Hungarian government after the successful march in September 2015, and as relying to the safe third country concept, reproduce older techniques of EU border externalization. By singling out Hungary as the focal point of analysis, I wish to contribute to the notable absence of analyses on East-Central Europe in migration literature, and join existing literature from the southern and eastern peripheral countries of the European Union (Andrijasevic, 2006; Cabot, 2014; Stojic Mitrovic, 2014).

In the second part of the article, I turn to historicizing the European border regime by focusing on some of the elements of externalization that constituted corner stones for the Hungarian government's restrictive asylum policy changes in 2015-16. These include limiting access to territory with legal and physical fences, safe third country rules and bilateral readmission agreements. Although the focus of the present article lies on migration and the place of Hungarian border policy in the European Union, I would like to underscore that there is an important domestic aspect behind Viktor Orbán's asylum policy (Rajaram, 2015; Fekete, 2016), which stands in a complex interplay with the government's strategic positioning in the European space.

In addition to engaging with the mentioned debates over two decades, I base this article on long-standing anthropological research on migration, mobility and citizenship in Hungary. During the last four years, I have conducted ethnographic research inside a refugee camp and among an anti-migrant movement, as well as witnessed and taken part in the emerging movement for the social and political rights for people seeking protection in Hungary. In 2015, I was present at the Keleti station and conducted interviews with people who were temporarily immobilized at the station (Migszol Csoport, 2016) and was present at the march of hope from Budapest. During 2016, I have continued multi-sited research in the field of migration and mobility in Hungary.

3. The two marches of hope

As if anticipating the events of summer 2015, Keleti Pályaudvar, the international train station in Budapest, is spatially neatly divided: 'upstairs' is the hub for transport and the main entrances to the station, located in the heart of the Baross Square and surrounded by magnificent, run-down buildings dating back to the 19th century. 'Downstairs' the visitor finds a shadowy, although newly constructed, network of subways and tunnels connecting the different corners of the Baross Square to the station. Since the completion of the renovation in 2014, the downstairs tunnels have failed to attract small shops and businesses, and without such development, the setting was ideal for an impromptu refugee camp to develop in the station from June 2015 onwards, when hundreds of thousands of migrants transited through Hungary towards western Europe. As the Hungarian government attempted to even superficially respect EU asylum legislation, most notably the Dublin Regulation, by blocking migrants from taking trains towards the west, by August 2015 there was an estimated one-to-two thousand people at a time occupying the downstairs passageway. At the absence of state agencies, national and international humanitarian organizations, thousands of Hungarian citizens joined together to provide food, clothing and medical aid. The migrants' frustration at the state of immobilization reached a saturation point after the tragic death of 71 people in an overcrowded lorry near the Hungarian border in Austria in late August 2015. The next day, a vigil was held upstairs on the stairs of the main entrance to the station. Local activists had prepared a cardboard sign with the text 'Europe, you have blood in your hands', which a group of Pakistani men took downstairs, rallying others to join. To the surprise of Hungarian volunteers and activists, sometime later around a hundred Pakistanis and Afghans joined the vigil, and began praying en masse, demanding to be allowed to board the trains.

The vigil sparked a week of protests. On Saturday 29th August, a hundred more people emerged from downstairs and began a week-long protest upstairs at the main entrance of Keleti, demanding to be allowed to travel onwards to Western Europe. At the continuing absence of state- and humanitarian organizations, volunteers kept on providing aid to the immobilized migrants, but only rarely joined in with their political demands by joining the protest. The stalemate between the police blocking the entrance to the train station and the protesting migrants was broadcast to the world, as numerous trucks of international media joined the scene and began to follow the situation from one second to another – CNN alone had four crews in Hungary. Volunteers organized a demonstration in protest against the

government's asylum policy, some waving European Union flags, but their protest remained spatially separate from the ongoing daily protest of migrants at Keleti. By Thursday, 3rd September, the exhausted, protesting migrants were becoming desperate, and a more and more diverse crowd joined the scene every day to observe the situation. The next day, a football match between Romania and Hungary would take place at a stadium nearby Keleti, and local activists were busy printing leaflets informing the migrants about the possible presence of football hooligans. Rumours of moving the protest to the German embassy began circulating. At 11pm that night, Sami, a young law student from Aleppo with whom I had become acquainted while helping another young Syrian boy to locate his missing parents, informed me that the embassy was not enough.[4] Some of the men were already convincing people 'downstairs' to join the protest, which would take a new form. They planned to start marching the next day, and walk all the way to Austria.

Carrying pictures of Angela Merkel and the German flag, the march of hope set off on Friday afternoon on 4th September, after some hesitation. The moment was ecstatic, as thousands of people – some with wheelchairs and crutches, others carrying their children on their backs – along with hundreds of supporters and journalists, impeded the traffic and crossed the magnificent bridges over the Danube. Along their way, the marchers found food and water bottles waiting for them, as Hungarians living along the route expressed their support by whatever means they could. Yet other supporters joined the march by car, providing slow ride for the elderly, for the children, and others who were not able to walk.

It took ca. 25 kilometers, first under a scorching sun and then after a forecast of rain, for the energy to fade. After living on emergency food and sleeping on the stone floor of Keleti with no hygienic settings, near the small town of Biatorbágy the marchers simply stopped. By the dark late evening, it was beginning to rain, and hundreds of people had simply collapsed on the highway and on the surrounding pitch-black fields. Some fell asleep on the asphalt road, while others retreated to the fields. Nearby villagers joined the scene with their *bogrács,* the traditional Hungarian cooking cauldron, and began preparing warm meals for the exhausted marchers, with supporters speculating what would happen next. The situation had quickly deteriorated to a catastrophic degree, and the march of hope had transformed into a march of hopelessness. It was difficult to come up with topics of small talk, as I was sitting on the wet ground next to an Iraqi man who was showing the scars on his wrists and recounting his experiences before managing to escape to Turkey and to the Balkan route. Like many others, he was on his way to Germany. When, after a while, we heard a rumor that there would be 'buses' sent by the government to transport everybody into Austria, we could not believe it. Migrants, volunteers, villagers, activists, UNHCR employees, and journalists from all around the world were gathered around the media vans, where they were charging their cellphones in the electricity generators, and debating whether this rumour would, or could, be true. Would Vienna allow this? What would Berlin say? What about Dublin? When the buses arrived, contrary to the speculation of us all, the relief, surprise and disbelief in the air was tangible. Migrants refused to board the buses unless also journalists, volunteers and activists joined them in order to cover the story in case they would be tricked, and

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[4] All names of informants are aliases.

brought to Hungarian refugee camps instead. After some negotiations, everybody could step on board. The Austrian border would open, and later buses would also be sent to Keleti, to pick up the people who had not joined the march.

The arrival of the buses meant the temporary collapse of the Dublin regulation and a short-lived rupture to Hungarian government's respect of European asylum policy. The march marked the beginning of a months-long escapade of state-organized transportation, or in the lexicon of the state, the 'smuggling' of migrants through the Hungarian territory to the Austrian border. As a response to the protest of the migrants, heightened by the presence of international media, the Hungarian government completely and utterly disregarded the Dublin regulation, that very European Union legislation that had caused the deadlock in the first place. The march signalled that the force of mobility and migrants as a temporary collective political subject is capable of overriding, even if momentarily, the divisive control of the European Union border regime and attempts of immobilization. This, however, was due a particular situation that did not endure.

Right before and after the march of hope, the Hungarian government minimized the number of people seeking protection on its territory by a series of legal measures, as summarized by Boldizsár Nagy (2016). The most important measure was the re-establishment of Serbia as a safe third country, thereby effectively invalidating the asylum request of anyone entering Hungary via Serbia and theoretically enabling deportation of asylum seekers back to Serbia. To ensure the respect to this safe third country legislation, the government created a so-called 'transit zone' on the Serbian side of the border fence. In front of this transit zone, people need to wait for an indefinite amount of time to be allowed to lodge an asylum request at the two available transit points.[5] Relying on a rhetoric that portrays Hungary merely as a transit country, the government also abolished all integration support for recognized refugees in June 2016. The next month, the status of Serbia as a safe third country was consolidated by an 'in-depth bordering' legislation that legalized immediate violent pushbacks of migrants to the Serbian side of the fence with no legal safeguards. In relation to all these measures, in the international media Hungary has been portrayed as a 'rotten apple' in European Union for deterring refugees from its territory, with the foreign minister of Luxemburg going as far as demanding expulsion of Hungary from the EU because of the harsh treatment of refugees. For a while, in some liberal policy-circles and for some media representatives, Hungary came to represent a counterpart to the 'lenient' border policies of German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The rupture to the correspondence with EU border policy that resulted from migrants' protests in 2015 seems short-lived. Indeed, the measures described above, that carry echoes of earlier measures by Western European countries, radically diminished the possibilities of migrants' collective attempts to resist fragmentation. In illustration, I fast-forward to another march of hope that took place in July 2016. At a gas station near the Hungarian-Serbian border in Horgoš, I met Hassan, who had made his way to Europe after being targeted by the Taliban for having previously worked as a translator for the Romanian army in Afghanistan. Hassan was very well aware of the developments in Hungary, and had waited in vain at the transit zone

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[5] For a detailed description of the procedure at the transit zone in autumn 2016, see http://www.migszol.com/transit-zone-information.

already for a week. 'No point going to Hungary, the border is closed. I speak some Romanian, I'll go to Romania instead' he told me as he was recounting the disappointing events of the previous weeks. Together with hundreds of others, he had taken part in a hunger strike a week earlier in Belgrade, demanding the Hungarian border to open. They were joined by some supporters and journalists as they embarked from the 'Afghan Park' in Belgrade on another march of hope – this time to the transit zones at the Hungarian border, where in Horgoš and Kelebija *ad hoc* refugee camps have emerged. Independent volunteers' and activists' access to these camps is severely restricted. It took the marchers five days to walk to the border zone. Although they were close to collapsing on the road, no buses arrived, and media attention was minor. In the end, no border was opened. At their destination, they found a fence, very little media presence, and a crowd of hundreds of migrants too exhausted and divided to join the protest. There was no official communication to the protesters, and the border remained decisively closed. In his disappointment, Hassan, who had been a leading figure in the protest, stopped his hunger strike and relied on his individual resources, deciding to take the route to Romania instead.

This second march, also using the hashtag #MarchOfHope on Twitter, followed a series of heightened border control measures not only by the Hungarian state as outlined above, but also by the European Union. These include the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, and a new Union-wide proposed policy package in July 2016. The planned policy package included many of the measures, such as detention, regular reviews of statuses, and general restriction of access to territory, that the European Commission had earlier criticized Hungary for.[6] By now, many of the voices that had criticized Hungary's physical and the legal fence against migrants the previous year, remained silent about the thoroughly documented violence against migrants at the Hungarian-Serbian border (Human Rights Watch, 2016; Amnesty International, 2016; Átlátszó, 2016). In fact, several other EU member states actually had continued sending border guards to help their Hungarian colleagues in blocking migrants' access to the Hungarian territory to seek asylum (Magyar Kormány, 2016a; 2016b).

I wish to contextualize and historicize the establishment of border controls between the two marches, and suggest that they are aligned with the European Union policies at large. The rupture to this congruence, the opening of the border following the first March of Hope in 2015 September, was only temporary, contributing to further generation of easily divided migrant multiplicities at the Hungarian-Serbian border. The efforts of the government to prevent such a collective action by introducing individual selection of migrants' at the transit zones and relying on the safe third country legislation resulted in remarkably different conditions. With a divided, exhausted group that held no hope, marginal local support and almost a total lack of international attention, individual people like Hassan instead resorted into individual strategies and resources, namely his knowledge of Romanian.

These vignettes substantiate Martina Tazzioli's concept of temporary, divisible migrant multiplicities that bordering techniques on one hand generate, but on the other hand regulate and fragment via individualized governance and control (2016). The first march followed a week of protest, and conspicuous absence of state- and

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[6] See also the analysis of the 'Orbanisation of EU asylum law' by Steve Peers (2016)

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migration management agencies, in effect leaving space for the migrants' collective subject to first emerge, and avoid the inherent splintering effect of border control, while being boosted by a significant international media coverage. The second march ended up facing a strong presence of the Hungarian state's border controls, with a limited number of people being allowed to enter the transit zone to seek asylum, and a fence that might be easy to cross, but would result in an immediate, and possibly violent, pushbacks to Serbia. Although both instances demonstrate acts of citizenship, whereby migrants claimed political subjectivity by an act that rendered them visible in the public sphere, the different experiences highlight how subjectivity is constructed in relation to intersectional support, dynamics of hope and desire, media attention and the presence and absence of border controls. Indeed, recalling the week-long chants of 'Germany! Germany!' at Keleti, encouraged by the German state's information that no Syrian would face Dublin deportation from Germany, and finally the pictures of Angela Merkel carried by some of the marchers from Keleti towards Austria, the salience of hope and desire in the build-up to the first march become apparent (Pine, 2014).

To sum up, the experience of the summer of migration in 2015 resulted in tightening border controls that significantly contributed to the failure of the second march of hope. The experience of these two marches points to the direction of Sarah Collinson's decades-old prediction: the integration of East-Central European countries into the European Union economy and space would not be complete before they had pushed the 'migration frontier' further to the east and south, and created a buffer zone for migrants in the same way that they themselves constituted one for Western Europe in the early 1990s (Collinson, 1996: 88). It is to this history of 'pushing the migration frontier' that I now turn to.

4. The logic of externalization

To start, I would like to point out that the border fence on the entire southern border of Hungary, as it stands at the time of writing, is extremely easy to pass. People regularly cross through, climb over, or crawl under it. While the fence stands as a strong symbol, it also remains just such, and has in itself not contributed much to stalling migration. The real barrier, as also noted by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (2015), is the legal fence that consists of the declaration of Serbia as a safe third country and the push-back law that allows authorities to deport anyone they find in the vicinity of the fence to the Serbian side. These elements in the legislation have produced a considerable migrant multiplicity, with at the time of writing more than 6000 people remaining stuck in Serbia, the majority of them individually looking for ways to move onwards. I posit that the second march of hope's attempt to resist the fragmentary nature of migrant multiplicity, failed because the border control techniques at the Hungarian border. I now focus on these legislative barriers set by the government, recognizing in them parallels with EU border controls in previous decades.

The focus of the seemingly ever-present 'refugee crises' in Europe have, through decades, shifted from Yugoslavia in the 1990s, to Spain and Italy in the 2000s, Italy and Greece in the 2010s and finally to the Balkan route in 2015. Restricting access to territory and the asylum process via readmission agreements and

safe third country concepts, not to mention the construction of border fences (Spain-Morocco, Greece-Turkey, Bulgaria-Turkey), represents a continuation from earlier similar policies across the European Union, as these building blocks of EU border control have remained similar through time. Although I draw parallels and analogies, I do not aim at an exhaustive history of EU asylum policy. Rather, I resurface some of those characteristics from previous decades that I believe are relevant in order to make sense of the operation of Hungarian border control as part the European border regime today, as expressed by the failure of the second march of hope.

The breakdown of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia resulted in significant numbers of people seeking protection in Western Europe. Yugoslavia's spatial proximity meant to many formerly socialist states, including Hungary, Western European influence that strove to prevent Yugoslavian asylum seekers from entering (Amnesty International, 1993; Lavenex, 1999). Around the same time, the Dublin and Schengen conventions were signed, although they would take effect only much later. In this context, Western European countries aimed at strengthening external borders against asylum seekers, eventually rendering southern EU member states likewise as a buffer zone against migrants seeking to enter Europe from North Africa or Turkey. The deterrence mechanism against Yugoslavian refugees that would enter core member states of EU via formerly socialist countries took the form of a policy and legislative mixture in the early 1990s, including the London Resolution of 1992, whereupon the Prime Ministers of European Union countries agreed on so-called 'host third countries' (Council of the European Union, 1992). Although not legally binding, the London Resolution was of significant political importance and paved the way for the implementation of such rules on national legislations that would later be codified in supranational legislation at the level of the EU. Several academics have analysed the consequent externalization of EU asylum policy from Western to East-Central Europe, as more powerful core member states of the EU (Germany, France) first applied readmission agreements and safe third country rules to the former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Collinson, 1996; Lavenex, 1999; Byrne et al. 2004). On one instance, the chain of readmissions led to the *refoulement* of Bosnian refugees, who were deported from Sweden to Croatia under a safe third country rule and readmission agreement, and then returned to Bosnia from Croatia (Collinson, 1996: 85).

The 2000s, the decade of the so-called eastern enlargement, saw many of the previous 'buffer zone' countries in Eastern Europe joining the European Union. The countries that had previously safeguarded the Western European member states against migrants, now adopted that very same legislation as a precondition for their EU membership, further internalizing the contradictory character of the *acquis* (Nagy, 2012). The complex web of readmission agreements paved the way for the externalization of EU asylum policy towards the south and the east. The European Union has acquired extensive rights to monitor and deter migration movements most notably in Northern and Western Africa (Boswell, 2003; Neal, 2009; Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009; Casas et al., 2011), with Sabine Hess (2010) and Marta Stojic Mitrovic (2014) studying the logic of externalization in the Balkans. Thus contextualized, the Hungarian government's declaration of Serbia as a safe third country and its later declaration that it had reached readmission agreements with countries in the West Balkans, does not necessarily signal an anomaly from EU

border policy, but rather a continuation of old policies (Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister, 2016). The declaration of Serbia as a safe third country is crucial also in the functioning of the transit zone on the southern border, that so successfully divided the collective subjectivity of migrants' second march of hope that I looked at earlier.

Before and after joining the European Union in 2004, the Hungarian asylum policy was based on the premise of in principle following EU legislation, but in practice turning a blind eye to people moving onwards to western Europe (Nagy, 2012). After Dublin deportations to Greece were stopped in 2011, the strategic position of Hungary changed along the so called Balkan route, and the country became the first Schengen country along the route to which people would be deported back to. Accordingly, the government has gradually framed its policies in the European Union frame in claiming to protect the external border of the Schengen zone. This, however, should not be read simply as eagerness to function as a buffer zone for Western Europe, but rather as a strategy of the Fidesz-government to advance its conservative nationalist agenda and European leadership in opposition to the perceived liberalism of western Europe, and against the backdrop of the orientalized Balkans.

Following a brief respite in 2012, Hungarian asylum legislation has gradually tightened, systematizing detention and establishing homelessness as a structural condition for recognized refugees. By summer 2016, along with Hungarian language education, all integration support for recognized refugees was abolished, citing the perceived transit country-status of Hungary. As a self-fulfilling prophesy, these measures have greatly contributed to the onward movement of asylum seekers and refugees from Hungary. Those seeking international protection often leave the country before or after their procedure, even though under EU legislation they are not allowed to. Many are pushed to precarious, informal labour and working illegally in Western Europe, while some attempt to re-apply for asylum in Western European countries even after having been granted refugee status in Hungary. The tightening asylum measures not only legitimize the false dichotomy of a transit vs. destination country (Hess, 2010), but provide a large pool of informal labour for Western European economies, running counterproductive to the official principles of the EU asylum legislation that expects refugees to stay in the country where they have been granted a status.

The situation in Hungary is not exceptional, as is not the only peripheral EU member state that has adopted elements of externalization that are rooted in the EU asylum *acquis.* Nevena Nancheva (2015) analyses the asylum system in Bulgaria, also sometimes dubbed as 'not European' in the media, and notorious for violence at the border, poor asylum expertise, long periods of detention, and poor or inexistent integration support. Nancheva brings forth a similar argument to my own: while the Bulgarian government should not be denied agency and responsibility, the 'inhuman' asylum system of Bulgaria still needs to be examined in the context in which it has been created, namely that of European Union. Nancheva highlights the internal contradictions in the EU *acquis* that constantly balances between security and human rights, tipping towards the former and keeping asylum seekers at bay. Instead of relying on a modernization discourse that would produce Western European members as targets to catch up with for Bulgaria, Nancheva identifies the source for the system's problems in the existing European Union legislation, and shows how the

ambiguity of EU *acquis* in prioritizing security and deterring asylum-seekers is rendered only more pronounced in the Bulgarian case. She concludes by dryly observing that 'the Bulgarian interior ministry has come up with nothing original by physically blocking the border' (2015: 451). From the perspective of Hungary, I concur with Nancheva's analysis and final statement, but explore further the kinds of migrant subjectivity and spaces for subversion this context generates, such as in the case of the two marches of hope.

After the September 2015 march that led to the opening of the Austrian border, the Hungarian government relied on EU asylum practice and *acquis* in finding tools to introduce border controls that emphasize fragmentation of migrant multiplicities, and prevent collective subjectivity from emerging again. In the transit zone, this is managed by strict rules of allowing maximum 10-30 people to apply for asylum per day, prioritizing families and vulnerable people. These border measures with a divisive effect on the migrant multiplicity were not present at the *ad hoc* camp at the Keleti station in 2015, where NGOs and state officials remained absent, and volunteers' humanitarian control of migrants, although present, was limited to formation of food queues. On the Serbian-Hungarian border in 2016, however, elements of biopolitical control create competition and conflict within the transit zone over who is allowed in, prompting people like Hassan to rely on their individual resources and networks in choosing an alternative migration route. Following Tazzioli's conceptualization and Hassan's choice of resorting to an individual strategy, it is consequently the temporary and divisive nature of migrant multiplicity that gains salience.

To sum up, since the 1990s, the European union asylum *acquis* has produced legislation that includes policy transfer and the creation of buffer zones. With the exception of the state-organized transportation of migrants to the Austrian border in 2015 following the first march of hope, the Hungarian government has followed the European Union policy of deterring and deporting asylum seekers. The policy transfer is not, however, one-directional: as Byrne et al. (2004) point out in their comprehensive study on EU asylum policy prior to the eastern enlargement in early 2000s, sub-regional dynamics have significantly effected the form of the asylum *acquis*. Although Steve Peers (2016) has pointed to the 'Orbanisation' of EU asylum policy, the more long-standing effects of the Hungarian asylum policy on EU legislation remain to be seen, researched, and related to Viktor Orbán's domestic strategy of the production of surplus populations (Rajaram, 2016).

5. Conclusion

Although Hungarian border policy has, at the time of writing, nearly succeeded in closing the border to people seeking international protection, I wish to avoid an apocalyptic view that reproduces the image of borders as impenetrable barriers, and Hungary as a vigilant watchtower of Fortress Europe. Instead, I will conclude with thoughts on the kinds of subjectivity that these border controls have generated, and what they are relational to. The measures adopted by the EU, along with the Hungarian government, have not managed to stall mobility, only change its form and produced an easily fragmented migrant multiplicity in Serbia. This change in form, however, is crucial in relation to the possibility of migrants emerging as a collective

subject. Many of the formative elements that were present in Budapest in September 2015 are decidedly different on the Serbian-Hungarian border in 2016. In 2015, the situation was characterized by intense international media attention, absence of state organizations as well as established humanitarian NGOs. The emerging collective subject was not managed externally, and although there was a significant number of scuffles and fights among migrants, these were handled internally. After the successful march, that I have termed a rupture, the Hungarian government continued to solidify and implement in practice legislative tools of externalization and biopolitical control, that had been in the making in European border regime over decades. The implementation of these legal measures materializes on the transit zone, and resulting in decidedly different circumstances for the migrant multiplicity that has been produced in the Serbian-Hungarian border zones in late 2016. In other words, the Hungarian government, while portraying itself as a protector of Europe, has been able to spall and atomize the collective autonomous potential, and emphasize the divided nature of migrant multiplicities, resulting in strengthened reliance on individual strategies. As Tazzioli points out, the biopolitical production, division and control of migrant multiplicities in border zones is exactly the factor that prevents them from acting as collective political subjects, to which the first march of hope merely represents an exception.

In addition, two more elements differentiate the two marches from each other. First, the presence and absence of supporters. Although only a few supporters in Keleti joined the migrants in their daily protests, when the time of the march came, hundreds of supporters joined in demanding the border to open. The second march from Belgrade gathered only limited momentum among local supporters. This, I contend, is related to dynamics of imagination, fear, hope and desires associated with the borders in question. The Hungarian-Serbian border has been the source of brutal stories of indiscriminate violence, and has a reputation of local militias attacking people with dogs – standing in clear contrast with the first march, where the general feeling was if all would stand together, the border would be opened, and history would be made. I suggest that these considerations of fear and hope bear consequences for the generalizability of Tazzioli's concept of migrant multiplicities.

The rupture that the first march presented in the Hungarian asylum policy's continuity with the developments and tools of EU border controls, then, remains exactly that. A temporary rupture that has, in long term, only contributed to the further entrenchment of divisive border controls, generative of fragmentative politics and fear. This atomization materializes at the transit zone on the Serbian-Hungarian border, where biopolitical controls have produced the exhausted group of people that did not join the protesting hunger strikers that Hassan marched with. The key difference between the two marches of hope presented, then, lie in the fact that in the first instance the people marching managed to defy the individualizing logic of migration management as a collective subject because of a certain situation that was characterized by a lack of managerial techniques and the presence of media. In the second instance, the marchers faced a strictly managed and controlled arena, enabled by Hungary's declaration of Serbia as a safe third country, and resorted to individual alternative routes. How could the individualizing effects be countered, and what are different forms of migrant subjectivities linked to? In order to understand whether further instances of collective protest against the European asylum policy are possible,

it is these differences and contingencies that need to be better understood. In other words, grounded, ethnographic research remains to be conducted among migrant multiplicities at contentious border zones, such as the Greek-Macedonian, Italian-Swiss, and Serbian-Hungarian borders.

In this article, I have presented two major arguments. Firstly, that the Hungarian border policy in 2015-16 does not present an irregularity from the European Union asylum policy and *acquis,* but rather a direct continuation of the logic of externalization that manifests in the form of restricting access to territory, safe third country and readmission agreements, and thereby the possibility of chain *refoulement.* Secondly, I have suggested that a temporary rupture in this continuation was the government's compliance with the demands of a group of migrants who resisted the individualizing effect of the migration governance and formed as a collective political subject. Around the time of this rupture, the declaration of Serbia as a safe third country, violent pushbacks and the creation of an obscure transit zone on the Serbian-Hungarian border has resulted in a perceived, if not real, closure of the border, with a splintering effect on the temporary migrant multiplicity at the border zone. In order to understand the dialectics between control and autonomy, the form of autonomy within migrant multiplicities emerging as collective political subjects, more ethnographically grounded research among temporary migrant multiplicities is needed.

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