Leros: Island of Exile

BETH HUGHES, PLATON ISSAIAS, YANNIS DRAKOULIDIS

Islands of Exile is an interdisciplinary research project which started in early 2014. It was recently exhibited at Manifesta 12 in Palermo at Convento della Magione, where a one-day research symposium was also organised on November 3 2018, investigating three key topics: architecture and its role in political regimes and biopolitics; spaces and archetypes of mental health care and de-institutionalisation processes; and the infrastructural violence of securitisation and militarisation in the Mediterranean and other European borders.

A highly contested site since antiquity, interwoven in the imaginary and praxis of power and territorial domination, the Mediterranean Sea today is possibly the most securitised and militarised zone on earth. Islands perform as agents of segregation and dominance, with their geographic specificities, natural characteristics and strategic location constructing a framework for geopolitical and biopolitical management, which cannot be separated from its institutional architecture.

The case of Leros in the Greek Dodecanese is a unique example within this history. It conveys an entire ecosystem of exile, detainment and violent processes of subjectification within which architecture plays a fundamental role.

Leros has been defined by its service under various regimes. This project focuses on the last century, from the Italian occupation of 1912–1943 up until today, covering a neglected example of the Italian Rationalist architecture, namely the plan of the town of Lakki/Portolago. The project follows the transformation of the infrastructure built by the Italian fascist administration, from notorious mental health care facilities via camps for political prisoners and violently displaced children from mainland Greece to its current use as detention centres for refugees. Leros has emerged as a disciplinary apparatus. Displacement, confinement and bodily restriction and incarceration exist within an idealised colonial architecture that celebrated a mystified, fascist pan-Mediterraneanism. It is a space and an exemplary landscape defined by water, geography and the south-eastern Mediterranean environment, and yet it performs a series of rather different functions — or not?

The project studied Leros in different ways and with a variety of media. The exhibition itself was organised around a series of distinct yet complementary elements. Three layered maps present specific moments of the institutional and planning history of the island and the town of Lakki/Portolago. A selection of key architectural objects from across the island, the majority from the original townplan designed by Rodolfo Petracco and Armando Bernabiti are presented in models. Photographic prints present key moments of this environment. This is accompanied by a selection of the plethora of archival findings; a print of the coastline of Lakki as a continuous line, the first calculation at play that put in place the Italian military apparatus and a set of relations between populations, landscapes, architectures and objects.

In this short piece, we are presenting six images, four photographs from Leros and two from our exhibition in Palermo. There is a particular way different media and representations have been used to investigate parameters of Leros and to capture different elements, histories and bodies. We have selected to show here four spaces, which are depicted rather empty, slightly estranged, in medium format photography. The four spaces are:

- the interior of the now abandoned Royal Technical School,
- a view of the plains in the north of Leros, from within the restricted militarised zone of Partheni,
- the coastal road of Lakki/Portolago, where the emblematic, fascist rationalist architecture of civic institutions has been appropriated by the local population, their everyday activities and the tourist economy,
- and finally, a bus stop at Xirokampos in Lepida, Leros, just outside of the fence of the mental health care facility, and today, the Leros hotspot.

Intentionally, we do not show individuals and bodies; we rather directed our gaze and camera lens to material and spatial elements. Each of these four spaces carries its own traumatic history. The special forces engineering regiment camp, located in Partheni, is one of the most notorious military installations in Greece, a ground marked by postwar political conflicts — a space of displacement, incarceration and torture. During the 1967–74 dictatorship, left-wing citizens were exiled in Leros as political prisoners, many detained in the camp, while others were detained across the island, within its rather peculiar architecture. White, rather simple, rationalist private buildings, properly designed public infrastructure that included, among others, a market, a generous theatre, a church, two schools and a tower clock, organised a regular yet exotic township. This is the town of Lakki/Portolago. Large military barracks were also scattered opposite of the town with their facades often covered by characteristically large letters and their interiors full of Fascist, Nazi and Greek nationalist

propaganda and wall paintings, some dating from the 1930s. Within these buildings, two notorious institutions were hosted: the Royal Technical School that operated in Lakki between 1949 and 1964, and the Leros psychiatric hospital, which opened in 1957 and still exists, reformed and de-institutionalised. The presence and influence of Felix Guattari in the de-institutionalisation process of the Leros Psychiatric Facility in the early 1990s makes it an extremely interesting case study, well known internationally in the field of radical psychology.

The problem of reform and the questions of what an institution is, which parameters define it and how a particular institutional architecture — if this category exists per se — responds to change of protocols, habitual practices, and even definitions or conceptions of the ›normative‹, is central to our study of Leros and the township of Lakki/Portolago. What is crucial here is to understand exile, detention, displacement, confinement, indoctrination, and the architecture that allows the above not as accidental or even pragmatic developments, but as relational, diagrammatic conditions that operate in an infrastructural field of possibilities. Leros testifies that the logistics and the logics of warfare as well as the project of displacement and the very conception of ›undesirables‹ and the ›displaced‹ produce first and foremost two things: the legal and social apparatuses that produce these subjects, and spaces in which this violence is exercised. Therefore, it is always within the asymmetric relations of labour that both the subject of the ›confined‹ and the one of the ›guard‹ are produced.

The project does not claim that architecture is the cause of this. And while the architecture of the Italian Rationalist period has its own qualities, it is also constructed within a very specific diagram. What is our interest here is not the degree in which ›fascist‹ architecture of various degrees could exist, or even if any kind of architecture could be more or less ›fascist‹; these questions have been addressed by multiple scholars, especially in the case of Italian architecture of the 1920s–1930s. Rather, our claim is that the relationships established by the plan and the architecture, the strict imposition of *gerarchia* — hierarchy — established a unique urban form and social fabric.

Tens of thousands of people exiled, detained and isolated and surveilled in Leros and the town of Lakki/Portolago, occupying, living, but most importantly being serviced, policed and confined by a series of institutions — the Royal Technical School, the Greek Military, the Psychiatric Clinic, the national and European police and security apparatus of control of the refugee flows — that employed the local population. The inaugural moment of the Italian military town set up these relationships for good: class, labour, gender segregation, multiple zones of controlled and restricted access, military and civilian infrastructures interwoven with a multiplicity of scales: the Med, the archipelago, the island, the town, the village, the building-object itself.

Interior of the now abandoned Royal Technical School, Lakki/Portolago, Leros.

Landscape in north Leros. Restricted access, militarised zone of Partheni, Leros.

Bus stop, Xirokampos, Lepida, Leros.

The coastal road of Lakki/Portolago, Leros.

Leros: Island of Exile, Manifesta 12. Photographic prints and the book with archival material.

Leros: Island of Exile, Manifesta 12. Detail of a reproduced multi-layered military map from the Italian naval and army services. Material: Plexiglas.

Ultimately, the role of the Lerian has become one of the *guard*, the *discipliner*, the *cook*, the *cleaner*, an extremely precarious service provider, her and himself in exile and completely dependent on these institutional forms. If the Greek state pushed tourism, leisure and small-scale construction industry for most islands and town in the mainland as the main economic activity, there was a much different strategy for Leros; to become an island of exiles.

The population is so economically inculcated in the process of control that it has become a self-perpetuating demand, of course with the presence of many instances and organised forms of resistance. The argument is that neither one thing in or of itself is of substantial scale — neither the population, the large barrack infrastructures well-suited to this application, nor the Rationalist architecture in and of itself, is unique nor the cause, but rather the coexistence and confluence of all these factors have created a *campus* of surveillance and exile. It is precisely the interdependence and co-existence of architecture and labour that perpetuates the island's role as an apparatus of control.

Curators

Beth Hughes, Platon Issaias, Yannis Drakoulidis
Exhibition design and production: Valerio Massaro
Supported by the Royal College of Art, London

Collaborators

Seyithan Ozer, Cosimo Campani

With special thanks to

General Archives of the State, Dodecanese County Archives, Rhodes, Greece.
ELIA — MIET: Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive, Athens, Greece.
ASKI: Archives of Modern Greek History, Athens, Greece.
Exile Museum — The Museum of Political Exiles of Ai Stratis, Athens, Greece.
Thanassis and Yannis Paraponiaris Private Archive, Leros.
Architecture Research Fund UCL/Bartlett School of Architecture.
All the psychiatrists and social workers that anonymously shared information about the facilities with us.
Enzo Bonanno, Mario Damolin, Vangelis Zacharias, Stefanos Levidis, Adrian Lahoud, Godofredo Pereira, Susana Caló, DPR Barcelona — Ethel Baraona Pohl, Cesar Reyes Najera.

Web

leros-project.com
instagram.com/leros_island_of_exile/
facebook.com/lerosislandofexile/

Photographs

All photographs by Yannis Drakoulidis. His photographs reproduced in this volume are excluded from the Creative Commons License which otherwise applies to the articles in this volume.

Inhalt

Aufsätze

Essay

Forschungswerkstatt

Interventionen

Autor_innen

Moritz Altenried is a post-doctoral researcher at Leuphana University Lüneburg and an associate member of the Berlin Institute of Integration and Migration Research at Humboldt University Berlin. His research interests include labour, migration, digitization as well as logistics, infrastructure and global political economy.

Manuela Bojadžijev is professor for Globalised Cultures at Leuphana University Lüneburg and vice-director of the Berlin Institute of Integration and Migration Research at Humboldt University Berlin. She specializes on migration and racism in Europe, and on cultural analyses and theory. Her research focuses currently on issues of the changing conjunctures of racism in Europe as well as on mobile labor and logistics in a digitized economy.

Gülçin Balamir Coşkun received an MA degree from the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and her PhD degree from International Relations Program at Istanbul University. Her research focuses on authoritarianism, political violence and refugees. She currently works as a guest researcher at the Institut für Sozialwissenschaften, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her ongoing project focuses on the role of media control as a symptom of democratic backsliding in the AKP era.

Yannis Drakoulidis is a photographer based in Athens, Greece. His work has been extensively published and he works in the fields of architecture, music, design and book publishing.

Mine Gencel Bek is currently a DFG-funded Mercator fellow at Locating Media, in the University of Siegen. Her research, teaching and civic engagements focused on journalism, peace and trauma, media and gender equality, media and children rights, communication policies in Europe, and changing media forms, technological innovations and the use of participatory tools in civic advocacy. Her current research is entitled »Mobilization of Digital Diaspora: Networking Migrants via Mobile«.

Naemi Gerloff studied Social Anthropology and holds a Master degree in Peace- and Conflict Studies from the University of Marburg. Her research interest lies on politics of migration management and the shifting constellations of transnational border regimes, especially in Sub-Sahara Africa. She currently works in a women's counseling center in Hamburg and is freelancing in the field of political education.

Leif Höfler is a former student assistant at the Berlin Institute of Integration and Migration Research at Humboldt University Berlin. His research interests include migration, refugee-studies and mobile labor.

Beth Hughes is the Head of Architecture at the Royal College of Art. She has worked on projects of all scales, public and private, around the world. Former associate at OMA, she now has her own practice based in London.

Platon Issaias is an architect, researcher and educator currently co-director of MPhil Projective Cities in Architecture and Urban Design at Architectural Association and a Visiting Lecturer at the Royal College of Art.

Juliane Karakayali ist Professorin für Soziologie an der evangelischen Hochschule Berlin und arbeitet zu Migration, Rassismus und Geschlechterverhältnissen. Sie interessiert sich aktuell insbesondere dafür, wie natio-ethno-kulturelle Zugehörigkeitsordnungen in der Institution Schule relevant werden.

Bernd Kasparek ist Diplom-Mathematiker und Kulturanthropologe, Gründungsmitglied des Netzwerks kritische Migrations- und Grenzregimeforschung, im Vorstand der Forschungsassoziation bordermonitoring.eu und im Bereich der politischen Flüchtlingssolidarität aktiv. In seiner Beschäftigung mit dem europäischen Grenzregime stehen vor allem Fragen politischer Paradigmen, die europäische Grenzschutzagentur Frontex sowie die Auswirkungen des so genannten Dublin-Systems im Vordergrund.

Therese Lerchl hat Geographien der Globalisierung an der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt studiert. Sie interessiert sich für die Verschränkung von Geographie und Recht unter dem Blickwinkel der Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie (ANT) und Performativität. Ihre Themen sind Migration, Aufenthalts- und Asylrecht, bürokratische Praktiken und Dokumente.

Sandro Mezzadra teaches political theory at the University of Bologna and is adjunct research fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society of Western Sydney University. He has been visiting professor and research fellow in several places, including the New School for Social Research (New York), Humboldt University (Berlin),

Duke University, Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme (Paris), University of Ljubljana, FLACSO Ecuador, and UNSAM (Buenos Aires). In the last decade his work has particularly centered on the relations between globalization, migration and political processes, on contemporary capitalism as well as on postcolonial theory and criticism. He is an active participant in the ›post-workerist‹ debates and one of the founders of the website Euronomade (http://www.euronomade.info).

Thomas Müller ist Politikwissenschaftler und Historiker. 2008 promovierte er an der RWTH Aachen über völkisch-nationalistische Konzepte der deutschen Westgren-ze. Neben antirassistischer Arbeit in regionalen Kontexten forschte und veröffent-lichte er u.a. über Grenzregime, Raumkonzepte der europäischen Integration und NS-Westforschung. Aus Recherchen in Calais resultierte der Band *Dynamiken der Jungles. Calais und das europäisch-britische Grenzregime*. Er arbeitet im Stadtarchiv Aachen.

Hassan Ould Moctar is a PhD candidate and Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Department of Development Studies, SOAS, University of London. He holds an MSc in Migration and Ethnic Studies which he obtained from the University of Amster-dam. His doctoral research focuses upon the social and political effects of EU border externalisation policies in Mauritania. It is funded by a National University of Ireland travelling studentship.

Ria Prilutski, Soziologin, promoviert zur sozialen (Im)Mobilität in der deutschen Migrationsgesellschaft und war bis Oktober 2018 wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin am Institut für Soziologie der Universität Jena. Ihre Lehr- und Forschungsschwerpunk-te sind kritische Migrationsforschung, Rassismus, Klassismus und Intersektionalität. Als Mitglied von Medinetz Jena e.V. beschäftigt sie sich mit rassismuskritischer po-litischer Bildungsarbeit und kämpft für den gleichen Zugang zur Gesundheitsversor-gung.

Matthias Schmidt-Sembdner ist Ethnologe, promoviert an der Georg-August-Uni-versität Göttingen. Mit seinem Forschungsschwerpunkt auf das Europäische Grenz-regime beschäftigt er sich mit Europäisierungs- und Renationalisierungsprozessen in den europäischen Migrationspolitiken, der innereuropäischen Transitmigration von Geflüchteten und den Konflikten um die Verteilung von Asylsuchenden in der Euro-päischen Union. Seit 2015 arbeitet er ethnographisch entlang der Brenner-Route.

Maria Schwertl is an anthropologist who has worked and studied at the Univer-sity of Munich and the University of Göttingen. She has done research on migrati-on&development, material transnationalism and NGOs as well as border technologies

and has quit science in 2018 to get out of structures she no longer wanted to support as well as bear.

Mira Wallis is a research associate and PhD candidate in the project *Digitization of Labour and Migration* at the Centre for Digital Cultures (CDC) at Leuphana University Lüneburg. She is also an associate member of the Berlin Institute of Integration and Migration Research at Humboldt University Berlin. Her current research interests include digital labour, mobility and migration, logistics, and social reproduction.

Aslı Yılmaz Uçar received her BS from the Political Science and Public Administration Department at Middle East Technical University and earned her PhD from Ankara University. She has been working as a faculty member in Altınbaş University since 2013. In her research as a postdoc, she focuses on the local government history especially in the Early Republican period in Turkey.

Sascha Zinflou ist in Benin und in Deutschland aufgewachsen und seit mehr als 20 Jahren Aktivist in migrantischen und antifaschistischen Initiativen. Er hat unter anderem zur Geschichte von Bewegungen Schwarzer Menschen in Deutschland, Schwarzen Menschen im Nationalsozialismus und Rassismustheorie veröffentlicht. Sascha Zinflou ist Diplom-Mathematiker und arbeitet als Unternehmensberater.

mⱺvements