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Extract, datafy and disrupt.
Refugees' subjectivities between data abundance and data disregard

Forthcoming in Geopolitics

July 27 2019, island of Lesvos, Greece: a UNHCR officer is uploading on an I-Pad the information collected from the asylum seekers who receive the cash assistance on a prepaid card. The data is temporarily stored on the I-Pad and is later transferred into the UNHCR database Progres: 'this is a work that takes me a couple of days every month, since after updating and uploading the new information into the I-PAD, the transfer into Progres is a very laborious job', he declared to me. Far from being a flawless data circulation process, the monthly verification appears as a quite cumbersome operation: every few minutes the officer has to note down on a piece of paper the data and information that are not accepted in the system or that conflict with data already stored there. In meanwhile, asylum seekers who queue to do the monthly verification check complain because they have just found out they are no longer eligible for the Cash Assistance, and because nobody informed them about the new eligibility criteria. Thus, the alleged standardisation of 'humanitarian logistics' (Attewel 2018) through data circulation actually clashes with multiple digital disruptions and chokepoints.

This article deals with the invisible infrastructures of data extraction and data circulation that sustain the logistics of the asylum system - through which people seeking asylum are channelled, controlled and selected in the hotspots (Antonakaki et al. 2016). It engages with data extraction and circulation by investigating the modes of subjectivation that asylum seekers as card beneficiaries and techno-users are shaped by. The paper argues, first, that direct data extraction and circulation in refugee camps and hotspots are combined with lateral data extraction processes which require the active involvement of refugees in data production and, ultimately, in their own govermentality. Second, and relatedly, it contends that refugees' humanitarianism is characterised by a constitutive dynamic between data abundance and data disregard and by multiple disruptions in data circulation. Hence, in so doing, the paper scrutinise three key operations of refugee governmentality: extract, datify and disrupt.

Taking into account that 'modes of infrastructuring of migration and border control' (Pollozek and Passoth 2019, 609) are heterogeneous and formed by the intertwining of digital and material circu-

lations, the article proceeds in four parts. The first section engages with the current debate on techno-humanitarianism and proposes to analyse the datafication of refugees' mobility through the lens of data extraction and, jointly, of subjectivation processes. The article moves on by exploring the data extraction activities and the multiple disruptions in data circulation: it explores the constitutive dynamics between data abundance and partial disregard towards data on the part of the humanitarian actors deployed on the ground, and how these latter can access the databases. The third section engages with the ways in which refugees' subjectivities are targeted and shaped by the multiple extractive activities: it shows that asylum seekers are both surfaces of data extraction and, at the same time, they are requested to participate data and knowledge production. The last section illustrates how asylum seekers as techno-users are shaped through a twofold paradoxical injunction: to act as autonomous subjects and to accept the spatial and disciplinary restrictions imposed on them. Methodologically, the paper builds on interviews I conducted with non-state actors, with Greek authorities and with asylum seekers during my fieldwork in Greece - in Athens and in Lesvos[1] - and on the analysis of official documents published by the UNHCR.

Techno-humanitarianism through the prism of extraction and subjectivation:

The financial support that asylum seekers receive in Greece is part of the Refugee Cash Assistance Programme which was launched by the EU in cooperation with the UNHCR in 2016 and which was then implemented in 2017, as a financial-humanitarian response to the so called 'refugee crisis'. According to the scheme, migrants who hold an asylum card or a temporary authorisation to stay are eligible to get the financial support which is loaded every month on a prepaid card[2]. Importantly, the Programme is managed and funded by non-Greek actors and constitutes a case in point of what might be called *internal externalisation* of the asylum: indeed, it is fully run by the UNHCR, funded by the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) and supported by the financial provider Prepaid Financial Services (PFS), which is based in London. At the time of writing, the two NGOs involved in the Cash Assistance are the Catholic Relief Services (CRS)[3] and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC).

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[1] As part of that, I conducted participatory observation and interviews with the UNHCR (in Athens and Lesvos), with the NGOs involved in the Cash Assistance (Caritas, Catholic Services) and with the Greek Asylum Service. I also interviewed humanitarian actors which, even if not directly involved in the Programme, are in direct contact with card beneficiaries (Doctors without Borders in Athens and Pikpa in Lesvos). I interviewed the financial provider PFS in London.

[2] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Cash%20Assistance%20Update%20Mar%202019.pdf

[3] Which has subcontracted Caritas Hellas to do part of the job

The card distribution and the monthly registration processes are conducted by the UNHCR on the islands and by the two NGOs on the mainland. In fact, every month asylum seekers' eligibility for the Cash Assistance is checked every month: this expires 30 days after asylum seekers get the final decision on their asylum claim - rejection or refugee status - and the amount loaded on the prepaid card changes depending on the number of family members. Importantly, among the criteria that migrants have to comply with to get the financial support, there are precise spatial restrictions: they have to stay in the accommodations provided by the UNHCR or by the Greek authorities[4]. In fact, in Greece the Cash Assistance programme is strictly linked to the Accommodation Programme for asylum seekers (ESTIA): when asylum seekers loose their eligibility for the former are also evicted from the accommodation.

A growing academic literature has investigated the flexible borders of the hotspots (Mitchell, Sparke 2018), the logistics of humanitarianism at play there (Garelli and Tazzioli,2018; Pallister-Wilkins 2018; Spathopoulou 2016), and how hotspots pawed the way 'for the flexible governance of mobility and asylum' (Papoutsi et al. 2019, 2200; see also Papada et al. 2019). This article draws on that debate shifting the attention from the material fences and infrastructures of border control towards the invisible infrastructures of data extraction and circulation. In so doing, it interrogates which subjects are enacted and how refugees subjectivities are interpellated. Methodologically, I contend that the use of digital and financial tools in Greek refugee camps needs to be analysed in light of the restructuring of the asylum regime as well as of the transformation of the islands from space of transit into spaces of containment (Spathopoulou and Carasthatis 2020). Confronted with the multiplication of data extraction activities and digital technologies in refugee camps, it is paramount, this paper contends, to forge analytical tools up to date, and that do not fall into techno-pessimism nor in techno-optimism. Indeed, the vocabulary of techno-innovation should not be taken at face value: as Claudia Aradau has pointed out, in the place of conceptualising practices as exceptional, unprecedented and anew, 'critical work needs to reformulate analytical tools that can grasp the reconfiguration and recomposition of discourses, technologies and practices' (Aradau 2019, 24).

Throughout the paper I use the expression 'data extraction' instead of 'data collection' in order to foreground the modes of capitalisation and exploitation connected to that and, therefore, to politicise what is presented by international organisations as a mere technical operation. Indeed, 'when we speak of data being "collected," […] the image conjured is one of neutral accumulation" while

[4] These can be refugee camps, hotspots, or apartments. Until the end of 2017, migrants who opted for getting an independent accommodation were excluded from the system. In 2018 the UNHCR started to accept people who were living in independent accommodations with a regular rent contract, therefore excluding all those without a regular contract as well as migrants living in squats. Now they also accept also forms of self-certification.

"analysing this process in terms of extraction emphasises the people targeted by' (Sadowski 2019, 6). As Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson suggest, 'extraction provides an appropriate way to name the processes by which capital draws on its multiple outsides to sustain and perpetuate itself' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2019, 38). Mobilising such an expanded understanding of extraction, I build here on works that put at the core 'the disjointed breaks, pauses, start points, end points – and "friction"' in data circulation (Bates et al. 2016, 4: see also Akbari 2020)

The implementation of biometrics technologies in refugees' humanitarianism has received a growing attention in the academic literature (Amoore 2013; Jacobsen and Sanvidk 2018; Scheel 2013) as well as in non-academic debates (GSMA 2017; Privacy International 2019). Literature on critical infrastructures and on the politics of materiality has paved the theoretical ground for scrutinising the role of digital technologies in migration governmentality (Ceyhan 2002; Walters 2014). As part of that, 'techno-humanitarianism' (Morozov 2012) has become a field of profit for hi-tech corporations and is part of what Ruben Andersson has defined "predation in the human bioeconomy" processes (Andersson, 2018). Samer Abdelnour and Akbar Saed have pointed to 'the technologizing of the humanitarian space' (Abdelnour, Saed 2014, 14) as a general trend in the field of humanitarianism which goes far beyond refugee governance. A growing scholarship has analysed how migrants tactically appropriate digital technologies to make their own way to Europe (Latonero and Kift 2018; Trimikliniotis et al. 2015). Scholars have also pointed to the risks connected to implementation of digital technologies in migration governmentality (Broeders and Dijstelbloem 2015) and to the restructuring of economy through migrant digital labour (Alternied and Bojadziev 2017).

Overall, works on digital technologies and refugees have centered around two main themes: security/privacy (Privacy International 2017) and discrimination/sorting (Latonero and Kift 2018; Metcalfe and Dencik 2019). However, as I will show later focusing on the Cash Assistance Programme, data extraction and circulation activities are not always used for tracking individual migrants - but, for instance, for generating statistics on refugee populations as techno-users. I suggest that the above mentioned debates on technology and refugee governmentality needs to be supplemented with an analysis of the infrastructures of data circulation and of the 'extractive biopolitics' which, following Aradau and Tazzioli, consists of 'modes of value extraction from migrants' mobility' (Aradau and Tazzioli 2019, 5). In order to do that, the increasing role of financial actors in managing refugees should be object of further scrutiny[5].

[5] Notably, both Mastercard and the World Bank have gained centre stage in humanitarian interventions, not only to target refugees but also so called unbanked populations.

Thus, the Greek refugee Cash Assistance Programme is situated within such a rapid widespread of digital technologies in refugee camps (Hoffman 2017; Jacobsen 2017; Turner 2019) which include prepaid cards, iris scan technology and digital identity. Advanced technologies which are presented as part of problem-solving logics, often work in combination with a wide range of technologies which are used on a daily basis by migrants as well - such as Viber, WhatsApp and Skype. In Greece, this panoply of technologies and apps constitutes a compulsory digital interface between humanitarian actors and state authorities on the one hand, and asylum seekers on the other[6]. More broadly, techno-innovations are often intertwined with unsophisticated registration modes. For instance, during the monthly verification for the Cash Assistance, humanitarian actors use to take notes on paper for double checking what migrants declare. As long as digital and financial technologies are used, datafication of refugees' mobility and value extraction activities are unfolded.A critical engagement with techno-humanitarianism involves interrogating the processes of subjectivation that are at play in refugees' uses of digital technologies (Foucault 1988). By subjectivation I refer here on the one hand to the humanitarian narratives around refugees' autonomy through technology and on the other to the ways in which refugees' subjectivities are shaped both by specific paradoxical injunction to *autonomy through discipline* and through processes of *data extraction*.

Data abundance and data disregard

The proliferation of data extraction activities should not be conflated with full data usage nor with data usefulness: rather, data abundance, partial data disregard and the making of subjects through datafication processes need to be studied jointly. Although data extraction plays a key role in the asylum regime, this is characterised by 'turbulent circulation' (Chua et al. 2018) and by moments when 'the networks fails, breaks down or gets out of reach' (Akbari 2020, 414). In Greece data circulation regarding card beneficiaries was not centralised for more than one year, and this provoked glitches and increased the possibilities for asylum seekers to dodge the restrictions and get the monthly cash twice[7]. Hence, the infrastructures of refugees' humanitarianism are not based on smooth digital connectivity: rather, in order to make things and data circulate human labour and a complex network of material and digital infrastructures are needed. An insight into the digital logis-

[6] Since 2016, migrants who want to claim asylum are obliged to first book an appointment with the Greek Asylum service via Skype.

[7] As this was confirmed to me by UNHCR officers in Lesvos in July 2017. Without a centralised database, as it was the case the first year when the Programme run, some asylum seekers were excluded by mistake from the cash assistance and some others managed to get the monthly payment twice as they moved from one refugee camp to another during the registration days.

tics of the Cash Assistance Programme shows that modes of data-production and data-extraction ultimately generate *data abundance*. Yet, abundance here does not refer (only) to quantity but to the potential value extraction and, simultaneously, to *data leftover*.

That is, while the data collected and circulated is a potential source of capitalisation, in practice a huge amount of data stored by humanitarian actors remains under-used, not-used and overlooked, as reported by UNHCR officers involved in the projects[8]. Indeed, partial disregard towards data is noticeable at the level of the every day practices of techno-humanitarianism. The financial provider of the Greek Cash Assistance Programme, PFS, accesses the basic information of card beneficiaries - name, surname and phone number - as well as the real-time information about refugees' transactions, but is restricted from getting more personal information due to the UNHCR protection policy. Nevertheless, by saying that the actors involved in the Programme partially disregard data - 'we do have even too much data!' - it does not mean that little value production is at stake. Indeed, 'data is very often collected without specific uses in mind' (Sadowski 2019, 5) and under the predicament that it might become source of capitalisation later on. Data disregard is arguably more widespread among the NGOs involved in everyday refugee support activities than at the UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva, where dedicated units work to process the data. Such a discrepancy in the (partial) disregard towards data is glaring in Greece, as an officer from Caritas stated to me: 'we do not know what the UNHCR might do with the data collected; honestly it is not our preoccupation, we do rather struggle in keeping up with daily activities and in dealing with migrants who constantly complain as they have issues with the prepaid cards'[9].

In fact, beyond this specific case study, data extraction activities in refugees' humanitarianism are characterised by a dynamics between *data abundance* and *data disregard:* the overproduction of data, that often depends on systems becoming more and more cumbersome, goes in parallel with a partial non-interest in data usage. Indeed, data abundance is produced in conjunction with a partial data disregard more than being driven by 'data anxieties' (Belcher 2015). Such a tension between data disregard ('we don't know what to do with data') and data abundance (incessant data extraction) leads us to complicate the relationship between data production, circulation and value in

[8] As a UNHCR officer told me in Lesvos on July 23, 2019, "we are not prepared for both working on the ground and making something with this data. Daily operations for making the online system function absorb most of our time. Most of the data we collect is not very useful, as it consists of information that the Greek Asylum service has already, or is about changes in family compositions and legal status".

[9] Interview with Caritas, Athens, July 18, 2019.

refugee governmentality (Mezzadra and Neilson 2019)[10]. The partial data disregard towards data shown by the humanitarian actors deployed on the ground should be read together with the complex technological procedures they need to deal with on a daily basis: in fact, as reported by a UNHCR officer i 'the more we go on with the Programme the more it becomes harder and harder to make it function; it is becoming a quite cumbersome system, far from being easily manageable'[11]. More data about the card beneficiaries they input and update into the system, more human work is required for avoiding mistakes and technical glitches: 'for preventing mismatches among the databases, we have to import manually into Progres the data collected from card beneficiaries during the monthly verification procedures'[12].

Hence, while on the one hand the multiplication of information and data is needed for keeping the system up to date (Chun 2016), on the other such data is partly useless for both statistics and control, and data extraction and circulation activities turn out to be cumbersome for the humanitarian actors deployed on the ground. Indeed, for the humanitarian actors involved in the Cash Assistance Programme, the storing and managing of data turn out to be quite cumbersome and the data extracted cannot be easily translated into actionable knowledge (Bellanova and Fuster 2019). The partial disregard towards data is also telling of the multiple conflicts among the actors involved and of a widespread tacit reluctance among actors in sharing data. For instance, the two NGOs involved in the Cash Assistance are not interested in collecting data, apart from those they need for, making the Programme function, nor they are intrigued by the goals that the UNHCR or other organisations might have in using the data stored. At the same time, the UNHCR partly limits the data that the two NGOs and the financial provider PFS can access and negotiations are still ongoing between the Greek authorities and the actors involved in the Programme in terms of the data that the former could get.

Far from being flawless, the logistics of data circulation is characterised by repeated disruptions and chokepoints, whose failures depend both on technical jams and on local resistances. In order to conceptualise these disruptions and chokepoints we need to consider that migrants are constantly hampered not only from getting access to the asylum system but also from fully using the cards and from knowing the correct steps to take - e.g. if they need to report a problem. That is, the disrup-

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[10] The frantic data extraction activities do not necessarily involve a straightforward production of value: on the contrary, by critically engaging production of superfluous data, we encounter the multiple struggles and obstructions that are at play in the meshes of data circulation.

[11] Interview with UNHCR Athens, July 2019.

[12] Interview with UNHCR officer, Mytilini, Lesvos, July 26, 2019.

tions that asylum seekers as techno-users experience depend in part on the confusion about the steps they need to take, and this generates a widespread disorientation on them. As Claudia Aradau has contended, 'ambiguity has also been deployed both to foster non-knowledge and to (de)stabilize the assembling of ignorance, uncertainty, and secrecy' (Aradau 2017, 11). Migrants' disorientation shows that the non-knowledge enhanced through ambiguity is not only an epistemic issue but it also has tangible effects on migrant lives.

The actors involved in the Cash Assistance Programme are confronted with differential access to data. This system of differential access and manipulation in part reveals internal hierarchies between the UNHCR and the other actors. Yet, the image of the *sluice-gates* is more wedded to the actual way in which financial, humanitarian and state actors access and interact with the data extracted from the refugees as card beneficiaries. The sluice gates of techno-humanitarianism are formed neither by neat hierarchies among the actors involved in the Programme nor by separate and different channels for accessing the data. Rather, they are structured as partial locks and differential access to the data and the possibility of acting upon it. The image of the sluice gates enables moving beyond a binary logic of access/non-access and highlighting that different actors involved have access to some parts of the databases and not to others, or can get access the database but not act upon the data.

In order to understand what differential access to data means concretely, we need to take into account the two databases involved in the Programme: the UNHCR database Progres and the database of the PFS financial provider. The PFS database contains information about refugees not as individual clients of the bank but as case-numbers connected to a single financial wallet hold by the UNHCR. In which way are refugees datafied in the PFS database ? The PFS database stores minimal information about the card beneficiaries - such as name, surname, phone number and the number of the refugees' asylum card. This is in part because for the financial actor, card beneficiaries are just para-clients[13] and not refugees (Tazzioli, 2019), and, in part, it is the result of the UNHCR data protection policy that forbids the circulation of sensible data. Due to the relatively minimal amount of information stored in the PFS database, and the fact that 'the identity paper contained in it - the asylum card number - is useless for the bank, as it might expire in the near future'[14], refugees are not source of capitalisation for alternative credit data. Therefore, Rob Aitken's provoking formula, 'all data is credit data' (Aitken 2017), should be revisited in light of peculiar territories of financialisa-

[13] I say "para-clients" because PFS does not conceive asylum seekers as real or potential future bank clients.

[14] Interview with Catholic Relief Services, Athens, 23 April 2019.

tion, such as refugees' humanitarianism, where process of data extraction and modes of capitalisation are intertwined with mechanisms of exclusion and partial obfuscation.

By shifting attention from *what* is in the database, towards *who has access to what* and *what actors can do* through that, we can grasp the broader configuration of power relations that financial-humanitarianism strengthens and the ways in which this affects refugees. All actors involved in the Cash Assistance Programme have access to the PFS database, which means that they can check asylum seekers' transactions in real time and retrace the history of financial movements. In so doing, they can verify if the cards have been used to withdraw the money from the ATM machines or for buying directly in shops. The PFS database is a digital platform used also for other purposes than tracking, checking and monitoring: indeed, it is via PFS that refugees' prepaid cards might be temporarily or permanently blocked. However, the two NGOs involved in the project cannot unblock the cards if a problem is reported and they need to ask PFS via the UNHCR.

Hence, the uneven and flawing logistics of data circulation mirrors differential access and use of the data. Greek authorities have access to Progres and contribute to populate that database with the information collected during the identification procedure, but they are not allowed to enter the PFS database, nor can they block or unblock the prepaid cards. Thus, the sluice gates of digital humanitarianism show that we could not focus the attention exclusively on the leading actor of the Programme - in this case the UNHCR. Indeed, if on the one hand the UNHCR has access to both databases, on the other PFS is the mediator for many of the operations that the UNHCR might do to act upon the data stored. More generally, focusing on the chokepoints and disruptions involves questioning the assumptions that some actors have a thorough knowledge of the system which is instead partially concealed to others.

Scattered digital subjectivities and lateral data extraction

The datafication of refugees' presence and mobility is associated with both *extractive* and *productive* operations. By *extractive operations* I refer to the multiple modes of data extraction that are deployed as part of techno-humanitarianism. By *productive operations* I mean that the datafication of mobility contributes to scattered digital subjectivities. As Stephan Scheel and colleagues have observed, datafication as such 'does not fully account for the performative and political implications of data practices' (Scheel 2019 et al, 582): indeed, data extraction activities contribute to produce subjects and, relatedly, to objectivize and know them according to specific categories (Hacking 2004; Foucault 1984). Which refugee subjectivities are enacted through these multiple extractive mechanisms? In order to address this question we need to consider subjectivity on a twofold level.

On the one hand, asylum seekers as techno-users are targeted and interpellated by humanitarian actors through lateral data extraction activities: that is to say asylum seekers are requested to actively participate to data production and to speak about their use of digital technologies and of prepaid cards. On the other, subjectivity refers to the scattered digital subjects which stem from what I call 'hit without interpellation': that is, refugees as techno-users are at the same time passive surfaces of data extraction and data combination processes that eventually generate digital multiplicities (Benjamin 2019).

Starting from the latter -scattered digital subjectivities generated through hits without interpellation. - it is noticeable that data is extracted from cards beneficiaries both as asylum seekers and as techno-users: that is, the datafication process concerns the legal status, the temporary location as well as the personal information of the asylum seekers and, simultaneously, their conducts and mobility. As card beneficiaries, migrants are turned into techno-users and their card transactions can be tracked and localised in real time[15]. The UNHCR database Progres is a complex and populated digital platform, in which refugees' identities are filled in and formed by a variety of data which is constantly updated by different actors. An insight into the Progres database enables getting a better understanding of how datafication processes craft individual digital subjectivities and virtual multiplicities. However, refugees' digital identity is the result of multiple processes of data extraction: these do not generate a discrete digital subject of asylum but a highly scattered one. Biodata, registration details, job skills and spatial location form the constellation of information which populates Progres: thus, a sort of socio-bio data wallet is associated to every refugee's digital file. At the same time, in the Progres database there is a relevant gender-based construction of refugee groups: indeed, individual cases are clustered around a focal point group which corresponds to the head of the household[16].

However, these scattered digital subjectivities are ultimately unaccessible to refugees and are not perceived by them; that is, they don't know how their biometric data, their activities as well as their social and legal status are combined in the database. In this sense we can say that these digital subjectivities do not generate an effect of subjectivation on the migrants. Indeed, scattered digital subjectivities might determine and restrict migrants' access to asylum and rights, therefore the multiple "data double" have a tangible impact on them; but how these subjectivities are assembled and what they consist of is largely kept out of migrants' knowledge and view. The prepaid card constitutes

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[15] Yet, the data collected at the registration by the UNHCR officers and by the two NGOs involved is not anew to the Greek authorities. Indeed, the information required for registering migrants into the Cash Assistance Programme are held already by the Greek Asylum Service at the Ministry of the Interior, as long as the migrants who are eligible are asylum seekers and they had been identified and fingerprinted as soon as they entered Greece.

[16] Thus, first, the family-based structure is at the core of the datafication of refugees as card beneficiaries.

one of the techno-material devices in which refugees' digital identities are inscribed. Actually, on the prepaid card there is only the focal point number, and not the individual asylum case number. Therefore, if migrants contact the financial provider to report a problem on their card, PFS can hardly find the individual case in the database, and therefore the mediation of the humanitarian actors is essential.. The asylum card number, the asylum case file - assigned by the Greek authorities - and the focal group code - assigned by the UNHCR - are the three identifiers that humanitarians, states and financial actors cross-check in order to trace back to the physical persons.

Overall, a frantic data extraction activity is at play, if we consider both the data extracted from asylum seekers during the identification registration procedure, and the ways in which they are datafied as techno-users. In response to my question about how the data gathered is used by agencies, the UNHCR's officer I met at the Headquarters in Athens answered with no hesitation: 'We do not know what to with the data, we have too much data to process, most of which remains unused'[17]. The data extracted is not mainly used for controlling and tracking individual migrants but for generating statistics about refugees' consumptions and conducts, as confirmed to me by the UNHCR and by the NGOs involved in the Programme: 'we can locate where asylum seekers take cash, but there is no point of tracking their movements. If migrants leave Greece, their card stops working; if they are in the country, we know that the majority do not pay with the cards in the shops, so we cannot see what they buy, while for identifying them we have more reliable tools, such as fingerprinting, as they can borrow their card to anyone else'[18].

Ultimately Greek authorities have no interest in keeping refugees in Greece, nor do NGOs and the UNHCR have as a main goal to monitor refugees' internal movements. Most of the information contained in these reports is not the result of processes of datafication nor of any real-time tracking of refugee transactions but, rather, of post-distribution monitoring activities. These consist in questionnaires prepared by the UNHCR that are given to the cards beneficiaries, who are asked to provide feedback about their experience with the prepaid card - how they used it for, and which problems they might have encountered. Phone calls are made by sampling and selecting few asylum seekers per month, and it is also a way for the UNHCR to check that those people are still in Greece.

I speak of 'lateral data extraction' to refer to modes of data-production that rely on the active participation of asylum seekers as card beneficiaries and techno-users. In fact, extractive operations in-

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[17] Interview with UNHCR Athens, January 7, 2019.

[18] Interview with International Federation of the Red Cross, Athens, August 10, 2018.

creasingly play a key role in refugees' humanitarianism, and they take place not only through top-down datafication but also through asylum seekers' participation to their own governmentality. Hence, direct extraction is not enough; a supplement of discursivity is requested to the refugees as techno-users and as temporary financial-customers. In so doing, refugees as techno-users and as card beneficiaries are not only bodily surfaces of data extraction, subjected to 'hit without interpellation'; they are also object of multiple injunctions to speak and are requested to actively contribute to their own governmentality,. How are refugees interpellated? And what they are asked? The UNHCR selects every month a certain number of asylum seekers 'by picking out people from different age range, nationality and educational skills'. The selected people receive a phone call and are asked 'if they are willing to take part to the questionnaire and provide feedback about their experience as card holders'[19]. Asylum seekers are interpellated as techno-users addressed *as if* they were responsible consumers who could decide how to invest and spend their savings. However, as H., a Syrian refugee told me in Athens, 'we receive this very helpful monthly support, that, however, in the end it is a kind of charity we cannot do too much with. What do you want to do with 90 euros per month apart from buying essential food and hygienic product?'. This is confirmed in the UNHCR report which summarises the questions and the findings of post-distribution monitoring activities[20].

Overall, the production of lateral data appears to be a crucial element of the asylum digital economy. Together with post-distribution monitoring activities other parasitic modes of data-capture are at play: these include the messages sent via Viber and WhatsApp by the asylum seekers, in order to report delays and mis-functions in the use of the prepaid cards. These texts are then recorded by the UNHCR into a centralised database to produce statistics and reports about problems and complaints. Thus, migrants are subject to compulsory data extraction and treated 'like a surface' (Benjamin 2019, 128) in meanwhile that they are also interpellated and asked to 'voluntarily' contribute to data-production processes. However, to what extent can we speak of asylum seekers' voluntary involvement? Indeed, the very boundaries between voluntary participation and not being in a position to choose turn out to be highly blurred: even if asylum seekers are not forced in any manner to answer the post-distribution inquiry, many might be worried of the consequences of refusing to do

[19] Interview with the UNHCR, Athens, July 18, 2018.

[20] https://www.unhcr.org/5c9217c87.pdf . As explained in the report, UNHCR phoned households - reasons why men outnumbered women - and asked them 20 standard questions, tailoring these from case to case. Refugees were mainly interrogated on the efficiencies and inefficiencies of the Cash programme and on how they used the money.

it. Ultimately, techno-humanitarianism also strengthens asylum seekers' dependency on humanitarian actors.

Interpellation as a technology of government recalls Fanon's account of colonised subject who is looked and objectified by the coloniser as 'nigger' (Fanon 2008) and, notably, Althusser's theory of how people are turned into subjects of a specific kind by being interpellated and called out by state authorities (Althusser 2014)[21]. Scholars have demonstrated the central role played by interpellation in the production of citizens's identity and refugees' status (Bassel 2008; Luker 2015). Hultin and Introna have called for a 'post-humanist understanding of interpellation' focusing on the 'ongoing flow of material-discursive practices that hail subjects/objects' (Hultin and Introna 2019, 1382). Yet, what distinguishes the interpellation of asylum seekers in digital times is not so much the performativity of the refugees status, nor post-human forms of interpellation: rather, to be at stake is asylum seekers' cooptation into migration governmentality and into data and knowledge production apt at improving the politics of confinement which obstructs their mobility . Asylum seekers as card beneficiaries are repeatedly asked to speak and how, by doing so, they are shaped *as if* they were responsible consumers from within a condition of forced strandedness.

Indeed highlighting the socio-technical dimension of data which has been deeply analysed by scholars, involves rethinking not only the relation between subjects and the non-human but also the role of humans as such. Ultimately, if 'raw data is an oxymoron (Gitelman 2013), it is worth noticing that data production and extraction are not only the outcome of technologies for generating and processing them, but also of specific power relations and modes of subjugation. The form of interpellation that asylum seekers are targeted by does not follow the confessional mode which consist in asking the subject to tell the truth about himself: card beneficiaries are asked if they want to participate, on a voluntary basis, in generating data about their own conducts and purchases. In this regard it is important to notice that the majority of the asylum seekers takes cash from the ATM machines instead of using the card to pay at the shops, Therefore, even if refugees' financial transactions might be easily tracked, digital traceability turns out to be useless for generating knowledge about the mobile refugee population and their conducts and consumptions.

Between datafied subjectivities and the injunction to be autonomous:

[21] The famous example of interpellation that Althusser mobilises is a policeman who calls a man in the street saying "hey, you there!". The man who turns around hearing that call, de facto endorses the position that the policeman assigned to him through the interpellation act.

The prepaid card constitutes a digital inscription of refugees' produced temporary identities and, at once, a mediation tool between refugees and humanitarian actors that contributes to establish distance between the two. In addition to that, it is also used as a mechanisms of preventive punishment. Indeed, as reported to me by activists, local NGOs and refugees themselves in Athens, card beneficiaries who were accused of abusing of gas and electricity in the temporary accommodations, have had their monthly financial support automatically deducted of 20 or 30 euros. As the UNHCR stresses on its website, 'any threats or acts of violence or intimidation, or aggressive behaviour […] may result in the suspension of activities and possibly of assistance altogether to the responsible persons. Furthermore, these actions may lead to delays in the provision of cash assistance'[22]. Asylum seekers might have their card temporarily suspended also if they are suspected of being potential terrorists or involved criminal networks, as reported to me by humanitarian officers of the NGOs who work on the ground. Nevertheless, also in this case, the prepaid cards' transactions are not used for finding and tracking suspect subjects[23]; rather, they are used as digital mediations for preventively punishing the suspect migrants, who get their cards blocked.

Asylum seekers as techno-users are physically obstructed and legally restricted in accessing and using the cards, and they are constantly disoriented, since they need to keep themselves updated and find out how rules and eligibility criteria have changed**.** Thus, the multiple digital disruptions of the asylum have tangiel implications on migrants' lives. Asylum seekers as techno-users are also shaped by the *humanitarian injunction* to become autonomous subjects, or better to act *as if* they were autonomous. In fact, the implementation of prepaid cards in hotspots and refugee camps is connected to the growing centrality played by discourses on refugees' autonomy. In this regard, it is worth noticing that cash assistance programmes are situated within a broader humanitarian discourse around refugees' empowerment and autonomy. Notably, autonomy has been appropriated in the field neoliberal humanitarianism and translated into a governmental tool for managing would-be refugees (Betts and Collier 2017). To be precise, autonomy is not only conceptualised and absorbed within a neoliberal framework; more than that, discourses on refugees' autonomy are disjoined from claims to refugees' freedom of movement and choice.

Thus, 'the incorrigible autonomy of migration that has instigated a crisis for "Europe"' (De Genova 2016, 44) is captured and rephrased as a regulatory norm that people seeking asylum need to attain, from within their spatial restrictions and legal deprivation. Refugees as techno-users are posited as

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[22]https://help.unhcr.org/greece/living-in-greece/access-to-cash-assistance/

[23] it is during the identification procedure conducted by the Greek authorities in cooperation with Frontex in the hotspots that potential or suspect terrorists are notified to Europol.

subjects who need to become autonomous; indeed, they are supposed to behave accordingly, *as if* they were responsible techno-users. In other words, asylum seekers are targeted by the injunction to act *as if,* temporarily, they were responsible techno-users. However, far from entitling refugees of rights or to transform them into bank-clients, programmes of financial-humanitarianism are fully enshrined into the asylum regime, which is predicated upon the rejection of the majority of the asylum claims. In Greece, since the implementation of the EU-Turkey Deal in March 2016, together with the "ordinary" denial of the international protection, channels of preventive expulsion from the asylum system had been put into place: migrants might be considered inadmissible to the asylum procedure and can be sent back to Turkey[24]. It follows that migrants who are temporarily entitled to the monthly cash assistance might be soon denied of the international protection, and thus destituted and illegalised.

If critical analyses about refugees turned into self-entrepreneurs (Turner 2019) or into financialised subjects (Tazzioli 2019) are partially useful for investigating how subjectivities are shaped by the injunction to use digital technologies, on the other these do not enable fully grasping the modes of subjection and subjectivation that are at stake. Indeed, asylum seekers are only temporarily incorporation in the circuits of financial-humanitarianism - while their asylum claim is processed. First, asylum seekers as card beneficiaries are clients of the bank but users of the unique UNHCR's financial wallet. Second, they continue receiving the monthly top-up only insofar as long as they comply with the established spatial restrictions explained above. These fictional narratives - migrants who need to act *as if* they were responsible consumers and techno-users - should be studied more in-depth, I want to suggest, as they are at the centre of techno-humanitarian discourses, although in a quite implicit manner.

Asylum seekers as card beneficiaries are requested to behave as if they were responsible techno-users, even if most of them are likely to have their asylum application rejected in the next future (temporary dimension); and they are expected to act as if they were autonomous consumers, even if in reality they need to comply with spatial restrictions and do not have a bank account (disciplinary dimension). To sum up, in order to grasp how refugees' subjectivities are shaped through their relationships with the digital and financial technologies of humanitarianism, we need to consider both the *datafied subjectivities* and the actual *conduct*s that migrants are requested to pursue, by acting *as if* they were responsible techno-users. That is, the subjectivities produced are not digital only: the *subjects without interpellation* which stem from data extraction as such, and the ways in which asy-

[24] Eu-Turkey Deal :http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-eu-turkey-statement-action-plan

lum seekers are shaped as techno-users through this combination of a *twofold injunction:* being autonomous and being disciplined subjects, by complying with the spatial restrictions imposed on them.

Conclusion:

A critical engagement with techno-humanitarianism involves analysing the datafication of refugees' mobility in light of the asylum regime as a political technology to govern, sort and illegalise migrants. Indeed, the asylum system has become a contested terrain of struggle and of strategic appropriations, and this is also glaring if we draw attention to digital and financial technologies: in 2019 even many migrant nationals who in the past tended not to claim asylum (like Albanese, Chinese and to some extent Pakistani) in Greece opted for becoming asylum seekers, as they have been informed of the Cash Assistance Programme. In so doing, modes of data extraction of financial and humanitarian interventions have been locally and partially twisted by migrants in the direction of a basic livelihood income which plays with the exclusive criteria of the asylum to temporarily stay in Europe.

Data extraction activities nowadays play a key role in refugee governmentality and the invisible infrastructures of data circulation complement the material logistics of humanitarianism. However, data extraction and data circulation processes are far from being smooth: rather, as this article has shown, they are characterised by multiple disruptions and chokepoints which in part depend on local resistances and migrants' tactics, and in part are the result of technological glitches. By insisting on data extraction I have drawn attention to how refugees' subjectivities are targeted by repeated acts of data extraction and, at the same time, how they become source of capitalisation, accounting for the "material conditions of production" and circulation of data (Bates et al. 2016, 8). The multiple compulsory technological mediations between humanitarian actors and asylum seekers show that these latter are objects of a twofold extractive grip: on the one hand asylum seekers are turned into surfaces of data extraction - what I have called *hits without interpellation*; on the other, they are subjected to the injunction to speak, and are requested to collaborate in generating data about themselves - what might be called self-datafication.

Therefore, refugees are datafied and subjectivised as techno-users through data extraction processes they are object of and, jointly, by being interpellated and asked to actively contribute to their own governmentality. By engaging with the modes of data extraction at play in refugee governmentality, the paper has drawn attention the constitutive dynamic between d*ata abundance* and *data disregard:* the abundance of data does not automatically correspond to value production nor is it auto-

matically translated into actionable knowledge. In fact, a future research agenda should explore how value is generated from the datafication of refugees' mobility, beyond the direct profit made by private actors involved in the migration industry, and which labour economy is at play there. Indeed, labour is needed to keep the databases updated (Chun 2016) and to make digital systems, like the Cash Assistance Programme, functional over time. The production of value and the human labour needed for storing and circulating data, sustain the digital infrastructures of the asylum, although they are often invisibilised by a focus on high-tech and techno-optimism in refugees' humanitarianism.

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