Communicative Acts of Citizenship:
Contesting Europe's Border in and Through the Media

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Situated at the intersection of media and communication and critical citizenship studies, this article explores how refugees assert themselves as political subjects through communicative acts of citizenship—everyday forms of resistance against the border regime enacted in and through diverse media networks. It discusses how these communicative practices of claims-making are shaped by refugee–volunteer solidarities and the shifting micropolitics of securitized humanitarian care at Europe's border. Finally, it considers the potential that such acts, especially those enacted within digital media spaces, carry for interrupting dominant media and humanitarian discourses. Drawing on 12 weeks of participant observation and 42 interviews with refugees and volunteers conducted on the Greek island of Chios between March 2016 and July 2018, the article concludes that despite their limited effects, taking the mediation of refugees' political agency seriously is methodologically, analytically, and politically imperative to avoid reifying the figure of the mute refugee so deeply embedded in the humanitarian imaginary.

Keywords: refugees, communicative architecture, citizenship, migration, digital media

"We have a voice. But nobody is listening." (Saleh, Yemeni refugee, Chios)

Moria, Vial, Vathy—"hotspots" on the Greek islands of Lesbos, Chios, and Samos—have come to symbolize the European Union's increasingly restrictive approach to "managing the undesirables" (Agier, 2010, p. 43; Human Rights Watch, 2017). "We are treated like wild animals here," a young woman from Kinshasa vented from inside her United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)-branded tent on Chios, as she recounted the everyday fear, degrading treatment, and abandonment by authorities. Yet, these spaces are characterized by more than their conditions of abjection. They have also become important sites of resistance against the European Union's border regime. In May 2016, for example, a group of refugees embarked on a hunger strike on Chios, denouncing the recently signed EU–Turkey deal and demanding that their right to international protection be respected. Several weeks earlier, hundreds of

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refugees occupied the main port for several days in protest against their de facto detention on the island, spontaneously erupting in chants of "Freedom! Freedom!" Both protests were covered by news media in Greece and far beyond, while videos and testimonies of the protests were circulated on social media by refugees, activists, and volunteers on the ground (Margaronis, 2016). Such moments of resistance that periodically erupt along the European Union's external frontiers highlight two central themes that have preoccupied studies of borders: First, they attest to the fact that "the element of contestation is never far from the phenomenon of migration" (Nyers & Rygiel, 2012, p. 8). Second, they exemplify the central place of mediation in acts of resistance through which refugees and those who stand in solidarity with them contest the EU border regime.

This article seeks to shed new light on these matters by bringing together debates at the intersection of two fields: media and communication studies and critical citizenship studies. The latter departs from conceptualizing citizenship as a purely legal institution and treating the citizen–noncitizen binary as fixed toward a sociological approach that highlights the performative dimension of citizenship and views it "as a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming, expanding or losing rights" (Isin quoted in Rygiel, 2010, p. 22). From this perspective, borders and camps emerge as contested sociopolitical spaces in which noncitizens actively resist the securitizing logics of control through "acts of citizenship" (Isin, 2008), a concept that "draws attention to the ways in which migrants assert themselves as political subjects by making claims against certain perceived injustices and inequalities" (Rygiel, 2011, p. 6). Such practices of claims-making take many forms: riots, marches, petitions, or hunger strikes in detention facilities, informal refugee encampments, or public spaces. Yet, despite the contribution of citizenship studies research to documenting various modalities of migrant activism (Atac, Rygiel, & Stierl, 2016), relatively little attention has been paid to the question of mediated visibility: how everyday acts of resistance are performed, enacted, and circulated across diverse media networks. To address this gap, it is necessary to transcend disciplinary boundaries and draw on insights from the field of media and communication studies.

Taking processes of mediation as their main object of inquiry, media scholars are centrally concerned with questions of "who speaks and who is silenced" (Georgiou, 2018, p. 45). Several studies have highlighted how digital media spaces and technologies in particular create opportunities—albeit highly constrained—in which refugees are able to assert themselves as "agentive participants in European mediascapes" (Georgiou, 2018, p. 45), claim their "communication rights" (Leurs, 2017), and thereby challenge hegemonic representations of migrants that underpin the European Union's exclusionary border regime (Nikunen, 2019). Others have documented refugees' "creative uses" (Coddington & Mountz, 2014) of digital technologies inside detention facilities through practices of "self-represented witnessing" (Rae, Holman, & Nethery, 2018) to expose rights violations inside detention facilities and mobilizing activist networks of support. Digital media, in other words, constitute an important site of political contestation of the border at the border.

Drawing on ethnographic research on Chios, this article seeks to contribute to this literature by asking how refugees exercise their political agency in and through the media. How are the possibilities of performing acts of resistance shaped by the shifting micropolitics of humanitarian spaces at the border? And to what extent do refugees' communicative practices of claims-making, and in particular those enacted

within digital media spaces, carry the potential for interrupting dominant media and humanitarian discourses?

I take as the starting point for analysis the conceptual framework developed by Chouliaraki and Georgiou (2017) that shifts our analytical gaze to examining the "communicative architecture" that underpins the regime of securitized humanitarian care in such places as Chios and how borders are sustained and contested through the communicative practices of actors involved in the management of refugee spaces. However, I argue that by neglecting the agency of refugees, their framework effectively empties the communicative architecture of a major source of political contestation. It is in response to this depoliticized reading of the actually existing reception regime on Chios that I introduce the notion of *communicative acts of citizenship* to foreground how some refugees enact themselves as political subjects in and through diverse media networks.

In doing so, this article seeks to yield novel insights into how acts of citizenship at the border are mediated within the communicative architecture, which, I suggest, is key to interrogating the radical potentialities of such acts and how they are able to (re)politicize the border as a contested humanitarian space. Furthermore, I argue that despite their limited legal or policy effects, taking these instances of everyday contestation seriously is methodologically, analytically, and politically imperative if we wish to avoid inadvertently reifying the figure of refugees as "speechless emissaries" so deeply embedded in the humanitarian imaginary (Malkki, 1996).

Communicative Architecture of Reception

In contemporary Europe, writes Balibar (2002), borders are no longer "situated at the outer limit of territories" (p. 71), but are dispersed in multiple forms throughout political and social arenas. As critical border theorists have long argued, bordering practices "proliferate across political space" (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2012, p. 63) and enter into the constitution of public spheres and citizenship. Borders thus ought to be approached as "social-cultural and discursive processes" (Brambilla, 2015, p. 15) rather than mere static dividing lines. Moreover, despite their grotesque death toll, the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas that demarcate Europe's southern borders are not only "a macabre deathscape" (De Genova, 2017, p. 2); rather, borders constitute sites of "multifarious struggles and tensions between practices of border crossing and . . . . border reinforcing" (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2012, p. 64), which extend to migrants' encounters with border control technologies to everyday forms of contestation within refugee camps located at the European Union's external frontiers (Atac et al., 2016; Dijstelbloem, van Reekum, & Schinkel, 2017). As bordering is as much a material as a symbolic process, they also include representational struggles over hegemonic discourses of the border and migrant subjects, over who is rendered (in)visible as a political subject within public spheres (Brambilla, 2015).

It is here that a distinct communications lens becomes particularly pertinent for the study of borders. A useful starting point is the work of Chouliaraki and Georgiou (2017) on the communicative architecture of the border, not least because their conceptual framework is, incidentally, derived from an ethnographic study on Chios. Approaching the "European border as a communicative space of power" (p. 178), the communicative architecture, according to Chouliaraki and Georgiou, "is not an optional add-on"

(p. 160) to the reception regime for newly arrived refugees operated by state authorities, humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and grassroots civil society. Rather, this "contradictory system of communication practices," technological networks, and discourses creates "[the] very condition of possibility" (pp. 159–160) of a highly ambivalent European border regime that oscillates between the contradictory logics of securitization and humanitarian care, and where new forms of border control continually give rise to novel strategies of resistance and "recalcitrance" (Dijstelbloem et al., 2017).

Chouliaraki and Georgiou (2017) identify three domains of reception on Chios: (1) military securitization: the domain for the identification and registration of migrants, governed by the Greek military, police, and EU border agency Frontex; (2) securitized care: the domain of humanitarian care, emergency relief, and information provision provided by professionalized agencies such as the UNHCR or the Norwegian Refugee Council; and (3) compassionate solidarity: the domain of informal care and hospitality driven by grassroots networks of volunteers and activists. The subsequent empirical task at hand is, first, to analyze "which discourses of reception"—such as securitization, humanitarian management, solidarity, or a language of rights—"shape which practices of care or security" (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017, p. 164). Second, the aim is to chart how these contradictory discourses are circulated horizontally and vertically via different media networks (e.g., social media, local and international news media, or closed communication circuits such as WhatsApp or Facebook chat groups) by actors involved in the management of refugee spaces. Exploring how the contradictory logics of care and control intersect across these three domains, Chouliaraki and Georgiou contend that the communicative practices of actors operating at the border "reproduce existing relationships of power and exclusion and simultaneously allow for new connections of local affect and solidarity" (p. 178).

The communicative architecture offers a novel analytical framework that moves beyond the voluminous body of research on media representations of refugees (Holzberg, Kolbe, & Zaborowski, 2018; Philo, Briant, & Donald, 2013), microsociological studies of migrant and diasporic communities' media practices, or refugees' use of social media in navigating borders (Leurs & Smets, 2018). Instead, it allows us to interrogate how power relations within specific border sites are being sustained and challenged through a multiplicity of media networks and discourses of reception. This, in turn, opens the possibility for a more ethnographic approach to exploring communicative practices, including refugees' "strategies of resistance against hegemonic discourses and control practices" (Brambilla, 2015, p. 20) that I adopt below.

However, there is an important limitation to Chouliaraki and Georgiou's (2017) framework for almost entirely excluded from their account is the communicative agency of refugees. At the heart of their analysis lies the claim that across all three reception domains, the voices of refugees were systematically marginalized within the networks of mediation used to coordinate the humanitarian response on Chios. Even in the case of local volunteer teams, whose actions were informed by "a politics of resistance to Europe's practices of bordering" and the dehumanizing effects of professionalized humanitarianism, their communicative links with refugees were apparently "minimal and fragmentary" and they too were, paradoxically, guilty of "excluding the very subjects of their solidarity in the process of supporting them" (p. 177).

Yet, even if it is the case that refugees' communicative agency is confined to the margins of information flows and discourses dominated by the state and humanitarian NGOs, the claim sits uneasily with research that has documented the "capacity of the excluded to speak and act *politically*" (Puggioni, 2014, p. 946) in sites of detention or refugee camps. Indeed, as Mezzadra and Neilson (2012) note, "at the border there is a certain intensification of political and even existential stakes that crystallize relations of domination and exploitation, subjection and subjectivation, power and resistance" (p. 60). As evidenced below, digital media in particular are important sites for the articulation of resistance against the structural violence of asylum and border regimes and integral to the formation of refugee–volunteer solidarities on Chios, locally and across borders. It seems that the empirical claim regarding the apparent exclusion of refugees from the actually existing communicative architecture derives, at least in part, from the fact that no refugees were interviewed as part of Chouliaraki and Georgiou's (2017) research. In other words, what they fail to consider is the political dimension of refugees' agency and media practices (Coddington & Mountz, 2014; Leurs & Smets, 2018; Rae et al., 2018) rooted in what arguably constitutes a fourth domain of reception: the lived spaces of refugees in which dense social and political relations and "solidarities" are formed (Rygiel, 2011). Within these spaces, media technologies not only provide a measure of "ontological security" and escapism, and form an integral part of an "informal economy of solidarity" (Smets, 2017) inside refugee camps but, as I show below, facilitate (self-)representational practices whereby "new kinds of political subjectivities become possible" (Brambilla, 2015, p. 29). These may often be barely visible, circulating under the radar of mass media. Yet, that makes them no less significant, particularly if we are concerned with how resistance and dissent, as well as the silencing of refugees' voices take place within the communicative architecture.

The conceptual and empirical erasure of refugee voices and agency is not only an ironic case of performative contradiction. Crucially, it effectively depoliticizes the account of the communicative architecture of the reception system on Chios specifically and the European Union's border regime of which it is a central part by emptying it of a key source of discursive resistance and political contestation. In the following, I therefore seek to bring refugee agency firmly into an analysis of the communicative architecture and the underlying politics of reception and solidarity by exploring how contestation of the border regime takes places, in part, through communicative "acts of citizenship" (Isin, 2008), a concept explored further below.

Contesting Borders and Camps

Approaching borders as "spaces of contention" (Atac et al., 2016, p. 538) and refugee camps as spaces shaped by everyday interactions among a multitude of actors—humanitarian agencies, state authorities, activists, and refugees—and continually punctuated by disorder and dissensus, the notion of acts of citizenship has been put to productive use in a range of ethnographic studies on migrant activism (Nyers & Rygiel, 2012; Puggioni, 2014; Rygiel, 2011). The concept shifts the "focus on those moments when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens—or, better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due" (Isin, 2008, p. 18) or, as Nyers (2008) puts it, when refugees and other noncitizens "assert themselves as political by publicly making claims about rights and membership, freedom and equality" (p. 161). Citizenship, from this theoretical perspective, is performative; it is constituted by acts that create actors and give rise to new political subjects. The focus, then, is on

distinctly political acts, practices, and performances whereby refugees break with the figure of the villain or "mute" victim to which they are typically reduced in media and humanitarian discourse (Holzberg et al., 2018; Malkki, 1996). Such acts may range from conventional forms of collective political action such as protests, hunger strikes, or petitions supported by networks of citizen activists, as in Rygiel's (2011) study of the Calais "Jungle," to individual acts of defiance and desperation such as suicide attempts or self-immolation. They generally take the form of claims-making vis-à-vis the state or humanitarian agencies, which exercise a quasisovereign role in the management of camps (Agier, 2010), as well as appeals for solidarity and recognition of migrants' political voices within public spheres.

But migrant agency, particularly in spaces marked by excesses of sovereign power, also includes less spectacular acts of defiance. These may be as seemingly mundane as a group of unaccompanied children in the Spanish enclave of Melilla filing a complaint with the aid of a human rights advocate to local police about their ill treatment by authorities. Drawing on feminist theory in her study of migrant activism in Spain, Tanzania, and Australia, Johnson (2012) draws our attention to these forms of "momentary activism": acts of citizenship whose aim is not necessarily "to transform the 'entire' world, but rather the life-world of the activist herself" (p. 124). Although such acts may rarely attract visibility via vertical flows of "remediation" from local to (inter)national media (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017), they nonetheless carry the potential to rupture the everyday operation of regimes of border control:

> It is this kind of everyday activism that characterizes the activism of . . . the irregular migrant. . . . It is both ongoing in struggles of resistance and survival in their daily lives, and momentary in that it becomes visible in moments of solidarity between citizen and non-citizen. (Johnson, 2012, p. 125)

Johnson draws our attention to the "transgressive solidarities" (p. 126) formed between noncitizens and citizens. As we shall see in the case of Chios, such solidarities are crucial for making acts of citizenship publicly visible through processes of "intermediation" (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017) across digital media. Indeed, audibility and visibility constitute necessary conditions that allow those excluded from spaces of publicity to defy "their banishment from the political" (Nyers, 2008, p. 162). This, in turn, implies that where a particular act of citizenship falls on the "spectrum of critical potentialities" (Lewicki, 2017, p. 277) is in large part conditioned by whether and how such an act is mediated to wider publics.

"Acts of citizenship," writes Nyers (2008), "produce citizens and their others" (p. 163). In Isin's (2008) words, they are inherently "dialogical" because an act "inevitably creates a scene where there are selves and others defined in relation to each other" (p. 18) and because rights claims impose obligations on others because of their "legal, performative, or imaginary force" (Isin, 2017, p. 189). Thus, when refugees protest their inhumane treatment inside a camp and publicize this via social media, they do not only affirm their own political subjectivities. The act inevitably (re)positions its audience as well—be it humanitarian workers inside a camp or bystanders witnessing the act online, in solidarity or hostility. Because "a key feature of an act of citizenship is its capacity to evoke a response" (Lewicki, 2017, p. 280), generating visibility in and through mainstream or social media is therefore a strategically integral element of their performance; mediated visibility is constitutive of citizenship acts.

Yet, although the importance of visibility is readily acknowledged, little empirical attention in literature on acts of citizenship has been paid to processes of mediation. Furthermore, as Rae et al. (2018) point out, "While scholarship is rapidly emerging in the relationship among refugees, smartphones, apps, and social media networks . . . few studies have focused on the use of social media networks by asylum seekers within detention centres" (p. 483) or camps for distinctly political purposes; hence, the importance of bringing a distinct communications lens to the study of migrant activism at the border.

Two studies, both taking Australian offshores detention centers as their case, mark an important exception to this lacuna. Coddington and Mountz (2014) document asylum seekers' extensive use of mobile phones to "communicate with friends, relatives, legal representatives, advocates, activists, and members of the public to transmit information, facilitate advocacy, and construct transnational support networks" (p. 98). This not only allows individuals to counter their isolation, but demonstrates how "new technologies offer new terrain for the negotiation of power relations in detention facilities" (p. 110). Similarly, Rae and colleagues' (2018) study of detention camps on Manus and Nauru shows how "social media networks," especially Facebook, "enable detained asylum seekers to conduct an unmediated form of self-represented witnessing that exposes human rights abuses and documents justice claims" (p. 479). Shared online by citizen supporters, and in some instances remediated by mainstream news media, these acts are variously distributed horizontally and vertically within the communicative architecture of Australia's border regime. To be sure, mediated visibility rarely results in any immediate policy change. Conversely, it may even elicit the imposition of further punitive measures. In addition, digital technologies are deeply implicated in border surveillance strategies and new forms of control (Dijstelbloem et al., 2017), allowing authorities to, for instance, collect metadata from refugees' smartphones or analyze individual social media profiles during asylum procedures (Meaker, 2018). Nonetheless, such mediated "acts of witnessing are making rights claims in the sense that they enact a right to witness an injustice and share it (so that the world may know) as both a political and ethical act" (Isin & Ruppert, 2015, p. 140). They constitute what I term *communicative acts of citizenship*, a notion that foregrounds the conceptualization of citizenship as a "communicative practice" (Livio, 2017, p. 2618) in the sense that it is "constituted through everyday talk and symbolic expression" (p. 2606), and the right to speak and to be heard forms "a constitutive cornerstone of citizenship" (p. 2617).[2] Furthermore, it highlights the central role of media networks, and especially social media, as discursive spaces in and through which concrete acts of contestation against border regimes are enacted and rendered visible and audible.

Method

The analysis draws on the findings of ethnographic research conducted during eight visits to Chios between March 2016 and July 2018. Spanning 12 weeks of fieldwork, I conducted semistructured interviews with 21 refugees and 21 volunteers. I also engaged in participant observation with the Chios Eastern Shore Response Team, the largest volunteer collective on Chios. Taking part in daily activities such as shore patrols, sorting donations in the warehouse, and camp distributions facilitated a wide array of encounters and informal conversations with multiple actors on the ground. Moreover, I was able to spend considerable

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[2] See Leurs (2017) for a distinctly rights-based approach to refugees' citizenship claims through digital media practices.

time in one of the two camps on Chios—Souda, an open camp with a shifting population of about 500–1,100 people run jointly by the municipality and UNHCR—and to overcome some of the "barriers to access" that typically reinforce refugees' "invisibility" in academic research (Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007). Through repeat visits, I was able to develop relations of trust with key participants in my role as researcher, gain their consent for gathering data, and witness some of the acts of citizenship discussed below.[3] I was thereby able to gain insights into the subterranean corners of the communicative architecture (e.g., closed WhatsApp chats) in which resistance brews and occasionally erupts into the public sphere that a parachute ethnography cannot disclose. They can only be gleaned from a deep immersion in the grassroots refugee–volunteer networks by spending time in camps, cafes, homes, hospitals, and the streets. It is worth noting that none of the participants self-identified as "activists" and some actively repudiated the label "refugee" in everyday conversations. Yet, the performative nature of acts of citizenship means that how individuals present themselves becomes secondary for it is "acts [that] constitute actors" (Isin, 2008, p. 39).

Refugee–volunteer solidarities have become an indelible feature of the European Union's border crisis since late 2015, particularly in Greece where thousands of local and international volunteers have been filling gaps in humanitarian care left by the state, UNHCR, and major NGOs. Critically, several recent studies on this emergent form of "volunteer humanitarianism" (Sandri, 2018) have highlighted the shift from an initial focus the provision of humanitarian assistance to rights-based advocacy on behalf of refugees. How this politicization manifests in terms of volunteer–refugee collaboration online and offline in the case of Chios is a key focal point of the analysis below.

Finally, it is important to situate the analysis firmly in the political context of the rupture affected by the March 2016 EU–Turkey deal. Prior to this deal, the Aegean Islands served as a brief transit point for tens of thousands of refugees en route to northern Europe. Since March 2016, however, people have been barred from traveling onward under the European Union's "containment policy" (Human Rights Watch, 2017), forced to await the outcome of the lengthy asylum procedure in overcrowded camps on the Greek islands. Rooted in systemic rights violations and inhumane conditions, these humanitarian spaces have emerged as important sites of activism. Thus, in sharp contrast to the spatiotemporal conditions of Chouliaraki and Georgiou's (2017) investigation, the shift from a humanitarian emergency to a zone of protracted suffering has fundamentally altered the kinds of discourses that flow through the communicative architecture. As explored below, it has created new opportunities and constraints for contesting the border through communicative acts of citizenship.

Analysis

Refugee camps are spaces continually interrupted by acts of resistance. Souda and Vial, the two camps on Chios, are no exception. In the following analysis, I first provide an account of two instances of momentary activism, focusing on how these acts were articulated and circulated via various media networks. Drawing on a wider set of interview and participant observation data, I then reflect on the limitations of

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[3] The collection of data was supplemented by regularly monitoring relevant refugee solidarity Facebook pages (e.g., https://en-gb.facebook.com/areyousyrious/) and public posts of volunteers and refugees I had met on Chios.

refugees' media practices for disrupting dominant media discourses and, finally, how the possibilities of staging communicative acts of citizenship are structured by refugee–volunteer solidarities and the closure of communicative spaces of dissent on the island.

Digital Witnessing at the Border: The Cage

Antar, a refugee from Syria, was on his way to Vial "Reception and Identification Centre" to collect his *harti*, a piece of paper granting refugees permission to stay in Greece, more than 12 months after his first asylum interview. Two days before, the Greek Ministry for Migration had rejected claims made by VICE News (Maragkidou, 2017) that newly arrived refugees were being held inside a metal cage while awaiting registration. Incidentally, in the car with Antar was a BBC journalist, who encouraged Antar to gather evidence that would debunk the official report that both knew to be patently false. Once inside the camp, Antar took out his phone and secretly shot a 17-second video and uploaded it on his Facebook profile. The video is of low quality, but it unmistakably shows a group of people, including women and children, inside a metal cage. Several days later, the cage was quietly removed by camp authorities.

An act of "self-represented witnessing" (Rae et al., 2018), Antar's video is a testament to how social media platforms allow refugees to expose rights violations in highly securitized spaces where journalists, volunteers, and other outsiders have no or limited access. Furthermore, his chance encounter with a journalist highlights not only the often improvised nature of acts of citizenship within these spaces, but also the importance of relations of material and affective support between refugees and citizens in shaping whether and how such acts materialize (Johnson, 2012). Antar's decision to document the cage was spurred by a desire to expose not only a particularly degrading bordering practice, but also, he insisted, the complicity of humanitarian and asylum staff operating inside the hotspot—International Organization for Migration and UNHCR protection staff, Greek or EU asylum case workers—who had been passing the cage daily for several weeks:

> The main point is that these [organizations] should be for human rights. . . . Why does UNHCR not do anything? Are all of [their employees] blind? In my opinion, if you see a crime you are a witness. If you don't say anything, you are part of the crime.

Rooted in a rights-based notion of injustice, the video constitutes a concrete instance of resistance against a material component of the EU border regime, enabled by and enacted via digital communication technologies, a digital act of citizenship whose capacity to evoke a response was entirely dependent on its horizontal "intermediation" (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017) across digital media networks and vertical remediation by mainstream news outlets. Indeed, the video was instantly shared by the dozens of volunteers Antar had befriended, activists, and NGOs, and was circulated widely on grassroots information platforms such as AreYouSyrious?[4] Antar also received several private requests from Greek and international journalists for permission to use his footage. Consequently, the footage reverberated beyond the microcosm of Chios: circulating within transnational refugee support networks and engaging supporters as "digital witnesses" (Rae et al., 2018) to the latest evidence of the dehumanizing treatment of refugees on Chios.

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[4] As of December 2018, the video had been shared by more than 2,000 Facebook users.

As this example shows, the media networks that sustain the reception regime on Chios do not wholly exclude refugee voices, as Chouliaraki and Georgiou (2017) suggest. On the contrary, by documenting rights abuses, they "enact themselves as citizen subjects" (Isin, 2017, p. 189) to whom fundamental rights are due, yet which are demonstrably being violated. In doing so, "the 'human' of the border" constitutes herself as precisely the "feeling, thinking, agentive subject" (Chouliaraki & Musaro, 2017, p. 547) who is said to be rendered mute and invisible. What is more, by virtue of the relational nature of acts of citizenship, refugees are thereby able to (re)politicize the discourse surrounding the European Union's border regime by exposing the silent complicity of the humanitarian apparatus in systems of border control.

Protesting Detention: A Self-Mediated Performance

"Please help me to escape to the moon . . . there is no racism and hatred. Send us to the moon which is better than all the earth," Mohammad, a Syrian refugee, wrote on his Facebook wall. For more than a month, Mohammad conducted a peaceful sit-in outside the gates of the Vial hotspot, an abandoned aluminum factory where asylum claims are decided by Greek and EU asylum case workers. Like Antar, with whom he shared a plastic UNHCR container in Souda camp, Mohammad arrived on Chios on a rubber dinghy on March 20, 2016, the day the EU–Turkey deal entered into force. Six months later, Mohammad was told that his asylum claim had been rejected. Facing the threat of deportation to Turkey, he lodged an appeal. After three months of waiting for a decision from the Greek Asylum Service, Mohammad set out from Souda to Vial, armed only with placards, coloring pens, and his smartphone, to demand an answer and his right to freedom of movement. For almost 50 days, and despite freezing temperatures and rain, this became his daily routine. Shortly after ending the sit-in, Mohammad was granted a *harti* and he was able to continue his journey to Athens.

In what sense was this an act of citizenship? Mohammad's protest was a distinctly individual act of defiance: No attempts were made to mobilize other refugees or volunteers, and most of those who physically encountered the sit-in were the camp's personnel, given Mohammad's strategic positioning outside the camp's rear entrance. Nonetheless, there was a clear public-facing component to Mohammad's protest. Scripted as a self-mediated performance, he poignantly expressed his condition as a refugee through a series of drawings and reflections on his Facebook page, framed in a language of freedom and humanity (see Figure 1). One drawing depicted a bleeding dove encircled by stars that resemble the EU flag; another had the words "Freedom is very expensive." He also used his smartphone to upload photos and live broadcasts to his Facebook profile. Much like in the case of Antar, dozens of volunteers whom he had befriended followed and shared his posts, eliciting a discourse of solidarity both online and in everyday conversations in the camp.

Figure 1. Mohammad's drawing in Vial.

Mediated visibility, in other words, was integral to Mohammad's performance. But, contrary to Antar's act, intermediation was largely confined to horizontal flows within the digital microcosm of volunteers and refugees with a prior connection to Chios. That, however, does not diminish the political substance and import of this particular case of momentary activism for, as Johnson (2012) reminds us, acts of citizenship "can be small, quiet and individual as much as they can be grand, outspoken and collective" (p. 124). Disregarding the latter would effectively imply silencing the minor acts of political contestation inside spaces marked by fear and legal precarity, and administered in ways designed to turn the subjects of humanitarian care into passive, docile beings (Agier, 2010). "Eat, sleep, shit," is how Antar described the daily routine in Souda. In a context in which freedom of expression is curtailed and many dare not speak up, fearing negative consequences for their asylum claims, Mohammad's protest was thus a means to restore his political subjectivity, a creative act of resistance against the arbitrary deprivation of his liberty. Although any rights claims remained implicit throughout, Mohammad's protest is clearly rooted in the long tradition of refugee-led resistance from within camps, where an "appeal to principles of human rights, equality and justice" constitutes "a strong claim against the inconsistency, illegitimacy, and even illegality" (Puggioni, 2014, p. 951) of state conduct.

Mohammad's act of self-mediated defiance thus illustrates how the use of social media allows noncitizens to "assert themselves as a visible and speaking being" (Nyers, 2008, p. 165) and defy the hegemonic image of refugees as passive victims who are consistently spoken for and about by others. Mohammad, however, needed no one to speak for himself: He was in charge of writing the script and "creating the scene" (Isin, 2008, p. 38). As he wrote in one of his Facebook broadcasts, "Some people say Mohammad, you're crazy, you're stupid. But look: I am human. Yes, maybe it won't change a thing. But I'm no animal. I do think about my future. I do and I try."

"Talking Back" and the Limits of Visibility

The two instances of momentary activism discussed above highlight the importance of bringing the political dimension of refugees' media practices to the analytical fore (Leurs & Smets, 2018). They reveal how digital media allow some refugees to discursively contest the border regime and enact themselves as publicly visible political subjects, without necessarily "being drawn into a discourse of deservingness" typical of refugee "selfie-activism" (Nikunen, 2019, p. 166) campaigns. Although "the Internet," as Antar put it, "is one important way to exercise freedom" for those confined to life inside a camp, it is important to recall that although "self-representative witnessing is an inherently powerful form of communication . . . it is only when their content is picked up and reproduced by mainstream media that they are, by definition, able to reach a broader audience" (Rae et al., 2018, p. 491). Indeed, the horizontal mobility of both acts was largely confined to the digital microcosm of volunteers with a preexisting connection to Chios or refugee solidarity activists. Moreover, "media coverage should not be confused with a broader democratic process that can affect social and political change" (Rae et al., 2018, p. 491). Equally, neither should sharing content on social media be confused with transformative collective action. "We don't need your emojis," Ahmad pithily remarked in reference to how volunteers should practice political solidarity.

Visibility, then, is a necessary if not sufficient condition for realizing the radical potential of acts of citizenship for, as Isin (2017) cautions, "whether their effects are submissive to existing practices or subversive of them cannot be determined in advance but only through the effects of these acts" (p. 189). Consequently, how acts are signified, mediated, and interpreted by audiences is crucial to assessing their effects, as is the broader context of vertical discursive flows generated by local and international media coverage. Refugees and volunteers operate in generally hostile public spheres, a mediated "space of appearance" where dominant "regimes of visibility" fail to portray refugees "as human beings with lives worth sharing" (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017, p. 1162; Philo et al., 2013). As John, a refugee from Nigeria, explained, "We prefer not to talk with them [journalists] because they share" a political agenda "for our camp, for our condition" with Greek and EU authorities. Others like Antar, who was featured in several news reports about Chios, have developed a highly discriminating approach to journalist–source relations mediated by trusted volunteers. Antar's refusal to grant Ruptly—a video news agency that belongs to *Russia Today*—permission to use his recording of the cage is instructive here. "I don't know what they will use it for," Antar explained. "Fuck Putin," he said upon discovering Ruptly's links to the Kremlin.

What these statements reveal is an acute self-reflexivity regarding the ideological agendas of news organizations rarely captured in existing scholarship. And it is precisely in response to an awareness

of what Chouliaraki (2017) calls "symbolic bordering"—journalistic practices that "appropriate, marginalize, or displace" (p. 91) refugees' digital testimonies—that some refugees have been using social media to circulate alternative discourses of reception. Mustafa, for instance, used his smartphone to capture seemingly mundane routines of camp life on his Facebook profile. From videos of food distributions and jovial exchanges with volunteers to graphic evidence of conditions of abjection, the result was an often raw, humane portrayal of life in Souda that resonated with hundreds of followers:

> I'm sorry but your media give you stupid shit, nothing true about us. . . . I use my
> Facebook to send the truth. . . . You can use Facebook in every way: like a message,
> like memory, like a witness, maybe to change how people think about you.

Others have used social media to circulate more overtly political content. In a series of sardonic commentaries posted on his Facebook wall, Ahmad took aim at the UNHCR and the asylum services on Chios. In one post, penned in October 2016 and accompanied by a photo of a rat found scavenging around the tents of Souda camp, he wrote, "Dear asylum authority, are rats #refugees? Or [are] you going to accept their #asylum? [Do] they have rights from the #UNHCR as rats living in a #camp? Or you ate their rights too[?]"

In instances like these, when refugees assert themselves as "claimants of rights, entitlements and responsibilities" (Isin, 2008, p. 18), social media become discursive arenas within the communicative architecture in which the contradictory logics of humanitarian care and control intersect. At times, this even extends to grassroots actors operating within the domain of "compassionate solidarity" (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017). For example, Ahmad left a comment on Chios Eastern Shore Response Team's Facebook page, triggering an intense debate about the team's complicity in regimes of control:

> Dear friends. We really appreciate [what] volunteers [are] doing. But we don't need
> clothes and food. . . . We prefer [volunteers] press on their government to change the
> bad situation of refugees. . . . The ones who should distribute [those] things is UNHCR
> as they are the responsible authority to take care of refugees. Why don't you blame the
> UNHCR for this? Or it's forbidden in EU?

Powerful as they may be in their portrayal of the (in)humanity of life in refugee camps and sociopolitical critique of "humanitarian government" (Agier, 2010), in the absence of significant remediation, such efforts cannot undo or subvert dominant media and humanitarian discourses of reception. Nonetheless, social media offer spaces where refugees are able to "talk back" and break with their assigned role of passive, grateful recipients of humanitarian assistance and their often strategic performance of "refugeeness" and "vulnerability" vis-à-vis camp and asylum authorities (Malkki, 1996). Consequently, to contend that refugees are "the object of 'our' care" but "never subjects entitled to speak to 'us'" (Chouliaraki & Musero, 2017, p. 544) is to render invisible the everyday practices of claims-making and alternative discourses circulating at the margins of the communicative architecture. Moreover, it neglects the transformative effect they may have on others' subjectivities, including those, such as volunteers, who purport to act on their behalf.

Sanctioning Solidarity, Censoring Dissent

A central point that emerges from the analysis of refugees' political uses of social media is the role of volunteers in making minor acts of resistance visible and audible to larger audiences. These relations and practices of solidarity, rooted in everyday encounters and mutual lived experiences of the camp (Sandri, 2018), are sustained partly through the intensive use of digital technologies and processes of "transmediation" from online to offline contexts (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017). Many refugees and volunteers are "friends" on Facebook and some communicate regularly through WhatsApp or Skype. These forms of digital and offline sociality are essential for creating the conditions of possibility of enacting communicative acts of citizenship. Consequently, we need to consider how volunteer–refugee solidarities on Chios are shaped by shifting power relations across the different domains of reception and how various mechanisms of silencing hinder attempts to politicize these humanitarian spaces.

In the first few months after the EU–Turkey deal entered into force, grassroots volunteers enjoyed almost unrestricted access to Souda camp. However, by Winter 2017, municipal authorities had begun to limit volunteers' presence inside the camp through curfews, written registers, and outright bans of specific teams. In one instance, Chios Eastern Shore Response Team volunteers were temporarily banned after some were suspected to have aided a refugee-led protest against inhumane conditions. As Gail, a long-term coordinator, recalled, "Banning us from Souda because that [protest] sign was printed in the English Centre, apart from being a clear breach of freedom of speech, was also a clear message: We can squeeze you out anytime." In response, volunteers have been urged by coordinators to choose their language carefully when posting material critical of camp authorities on their Facebook accounts.

In an increasingly restrictive milieu, volunteer teams thus have had to carefully navigate between publicly speaking out on the one hand and maintaining access to the camp on the other. As Naomi, the head of another volunteer team, explained, "It's a very fine line to walk between helping [refugees] and being a cowboy. If you're going to splash something [in the media] you need to back it up. If the authorities come down hard on me, I'm done." The ability of authorities to penalize grassroots volunteers for exposing the practices of more powerful actors was vividly illustrated after it emerged that a particularly scathing report in *The Guardian* about the lack of protection for unaccompanied children on Chios was partly facilitated by Naomi. The report, which contained a number of inaccuracies, became the subject of a heated discussion at the island's weekly coordination meeting chaired by the UNHCR and attended by representatives of all actors on Chios. Visibly irritated, senior UNHCR and camp management officials called for increased restrictions on journalists' access to the camp and urged everyone to exercise caution when approached by the media. Vertical mobility of acts of dissent within the communicative architecture thus may carry severe sanctions. Not only were the team's volunteers refused access to the camp for several days but, as Naomi revealed, "[UNHCR] protection officers that I have normally had OK relations with, now they don't speak to me. They can stonewall us a lot."[5]

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[5] Attempts to silence dissent extend to more mundane tactics. Several long-term volunteers spoke of being reprimanded by UNHCR employees for raising complaints about the treatment of individual refugees on the main humanitarian coordination WhatsApp chat group. Others have been told by camp managers not to post critical content on Facebook.

In sum, how collective acts of resistance materialize is intimately shaped by the micropolitics in specific sites of reception. Authorities are able to curtail attempts to politicize the spaces of humanitarian action and thus the discourses that circulate through the communicative architecture through various modes of silencing. The closing of communicative spaces for dissent carries important consequences for the possibility of enacting refugee–volunteer solidarities: "Why is it that volunteers are not speaking?" John asked. "Some volunteers say they are not politicians. They don't come here to make politics, they only come to help. But it's not good. Speaking [out] is also helping!" Facing conditions of legal and material precarity, the effects of such silencing naturally bear far more heavily on refugees. "On the inside, people will always feel afraid. I would never speak to a journalist," Patrice, the leader of the African refugee community on Chios, acknowledged. "I am nothing," he added, speaking about the difficulties of collective mobilization and invoking explicitly rights-based claims in his daily encounters with camp authorities. "I am a number for them. I know my place here. I am an immigrant."

Conclusion: Toward Radical Openings

This article has explored how refugees engage in communicative acts of claims-making in the specific case of the protracted border crisis on Chios. It has shown how the possibilities of performing such acts are intimately shaped by the formation of refugee–volunteer solidarities and their ability to navigate the micropolitics of securitized humanitarianism on the island. By introducing the notion of communicative acts of citizenship, this article has made a two-fold contribution to debates at the intersection of communication and citizenship studies. First, by drawing attention to refugee's political agency via the latter, it has sought to bring politics firmly into the analysis of the communicative architecture of reception. In other words, it has extended the analytical framework for understanding the mediated border by including the political dimension of refugees' media practices. Second, by adopting a distinct communications lens, it has sought to further our understanding of how acts of citizenship are mediated or silenced, online and offline, and to what effect. In documenting these acts of political contestation, it has shown that the "networks of mediation and discourse" that constitute the communicative architecture are not only "indispensable in the mass management of whole populations" (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017, p. 177). They are also networks in and through which refugees are able to challenge the regime of securitized humanitarianism at the border. More concretely, this article has documented how by creating spaces for claims-making, social media in particular allow some refugees to circumvent the mechanisms of erasure or outright vilification whereby they are denied political voice.

Three implications follow from the analysis presented in this article. First, the findings pose a challenge to communications research that excludes the voices of refugees by methodological design. For if power, resistance, solidarity, and mediation are all inherently relational concepts, then investigations of media networks and discourses at the border must aspire to contemplate the views and experiences of refugees, despite logistical, security, and ethical barriers to accessing refugee spaces. What "refugees' and migrants' needs and rights" (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017, p. 165) are cannot simply be assumed. To do so implies, for instance, mistaking strategic silences for the often astute self-reflexivity characteristic of refugees' media practices documented above. It also risks being left with impoverished claims about the political uses of social media by refugees. Taking seriously practices of self-representation and digital witnessing thus beckons us to nuance generalized claims that "refugees have been consistently spoken

about and spoken for but never spoke for themselves" (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017, pp. 1173–1174) within spaces of publicity.

Furthermore, disregarding refugees' capacity for political speech and analysis of their own predicament risks further silencing, by analytical default, refugees' voices already banished to the margins of media and discursive networks. The consequence is not only a depoliticized reading of the actually existing communicative architecture but reification of the figure of the "speechless" (Malkki, 1996) refugee in the humanitarian imaginary. As Nyers (2008) argues, voice is intimately tied to the political and, therefore, it is the capacity of speech to articulate notions of justice and injustice that "allows for the space of the political to emerge" (p. 163). And it is, in part, through the kinds of acts of citizenship documented above that refugees assert themselves as visible and audible political subjects.

Finally, this carries important ethicopolitical implications, particularly if we resist judging acts of resistance within these spaces "according to immediate outcomes" (Puggioni, 2014, p. 951). For, however limited the communicative acts of citizenship discussed here may be in terms of their direct effects on bordering practices on Chios let alone affecting broader political challenges to the EU border regime, these "fleeting interruptions and flashes of resistance create politics itself within this state of exception" (Johnson, 2012, p. 125) that characterizes spaces of refugee management at the border. "Within such moments," Johnson adds, "migrants find a voice and demand an equality of place.". The radical potentiality of such acts thus derives from their capacity to mark a rupture in established norms and conventions that define who is endowed with the capacity to speak as a political subject in public spheres. In other words, communicative acts of witnessing and claims-making, Isin and Ruppert (2015) argue, create "openings"—"moments and spaces when and where thinking, speaking, and acting differently becomes possible by resisting and resignifying conventions" (p. 131). In this regard, Antar's or Mohammad's rights-based claims are much more than legal statements. They are, above all, performative and imaginary claims toward "rights that as yet do not exist" and "a call for rights to come," containing within itself an imaginary of a more humane border regime. Yet, whether such potentialities become realized depends in large part on their mediation, "on how resignification plays out" (Isin & Ruppert, p. 131). In other words, it depends not only on whether they are rendered audible, but whether we are listening.

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