»Refugees Are Part Of Our Future«

Dr. Begüm Başdağ is a geographer, human rights defender and Einstein Fellow at BIM at Humboldt Universität. Here she talks about her research with Afghan refugees in Greece, the situation of the camps in Lesvos island, the EU-Turkey Deal and the current threats of coronavirus. • Interview by Wolfgang Farkas

Dr. Başdağ, unfortunately, we can’t meet personally for this interview. But we can try on the telephone – from desk to desk. Since you’ve finished the first half of your Einstein Fellowship, before we talk about the situation of the refugees on the Greek islands – I’d like to ask you about your current project? What research are you conducting?

Begüm Başdağ: My proposed project is about the politics of solidarity and refugee care, with a focus on Afghan men in Greece and Berlin. The title is »Masculinities on the Move: Spatial Politics of Solidarity and Refugee Care in Germany and Greece«. I did participatory research and conducted 15 interviews in Greece this past summer.

What made you curious about researching masculinity in this context?

As a feminist geographer my work has always focused on gender and sexuality in the past, so this has remained my main topic of interest in migration studies. When people talk about gender, people usually understand gender studies as »women studies«. But this is not true obviously. We must also consider the experiences of men and the violence they face in these environments, simply just because they’re men.

»When people talk about gender, people usually understand gender studies as »women studies«. But this is not true obviously. We must also consider the experiences of men and the violence they face in these environments, simply just because they’re men.«

When we look at the data in Europe and in Greece in particular, Afghans are the largest group of refugees and asylum seekers after Syrians in the last few years. Since 2000, with the war in Afghanistan, most of the Afghans that arrived in Europe have been single young men and minors under 18. Refugee men, especially single young men in Europe face discrimination and are stigmatized, because they are perceived as a threat to society. Afghan men also face the highest number of deportations from Europe. Many Afghans are sent back to Afghanistan, as many countries in Europe define Kabul as a safe place.
While there is plenty of research on Syrians and women refugees, Afghan men are made invisible in migration and gender studies. I therefore really wanted to focus on Afghan men to understand how they reconstruct their identities as they move through borders. I conducted about fifteen individual semi-structured interviews with Afghan men this past summer on the Greek island of Lesvos. I tried to understand their experiences en route, and how they are shaped by both the feeling of being in transit and being stuck on an island.

Your main place of research has been Lesvos so far – so how did you meet the young Afghan men?

When you look at Moria Camp in Lesvos, it is like a little Afghanistan. 70 percent of the population in Moria is from Afghanistan at the moment – not only Afghan men of course. There are also a lot of women, children and families. Thus, they are in a way forced to carry on with many of the embodied traditions and cultural norms in the camps. At the same time, for the first time in their lives, they are engaging or seeing people from across Europe who are either working in the camps or other humanitarian centers, Greeks in the city or mere tourists. Lesvos is their first moment of contact with Europe.

Where did you meet them and talk to them?

In different places. Some would be around the Moria camp and others in the city center.

Do you know the island very well?

Yes, I’ve been working on and off in Lesvos for six years now. I started going to Lesvos and got involved in solidarity networks when I was working for Amnesty International Turkey as the campaigns and activism coordinator. I was primarily responsible for refugee rights in Europe.

The common belief is that some university professor will write something that nobody will ever really read or need and thus it will have no impact.«

The main problem is that academic research isn’t seen as relevant in these contexts. Since 2015, many academic researchers have been working in «crisis» locations like Lesvos. The common belief is that some university professor will write something that nobody will ever really read or need and thus it will have no impact. Hotspots are challenging places for a variety of reasons especially because people are always firefighting. Everyday there is an emergency. In the midst of all of this, people have little time to sit and reflect on their experiences, and even less for a short interview.

When I’d interview an asylum seeker from Moria camp, this meant he would miss a meal, as it takes a few hours in line to get food. They would usually get held up with something and we would have to reschedule many times. When I met with them in the city, I offered them bus tickets and, depending on the time of the day, I offered lunch, coffee or dinner. I wanted
to make sure that I am not an extra burden on them. In almost all interviews, the person I spoke to would take 15 minutes to explain himself and apologize about not being able to pick up the check. It was indeed hard for them to accept that I, as a woman (also a woman from Turkey makes a difference), paid for their food or drinks. It is those moments where you keep rethinking how to create the best settings for the interviews.

They don’t expect positive results from the academic interviews and projects, do they?

No, they don’t. Especially since 2015, there has been an overflow of academic interest in these locations. Refugees or other people working on the islands don’t see any change happening in their lives. Academic work has no immediate impact in the lives of people on the islands. Academic knowledge is important, of course, but for them it’s different because they do not see the direct effect of the work we do on the ground. I think, as academics, we really must reconsider how we do research and the ways in which we produce knowledge. I believe it must be much more participatory. These are some of my methodological questions and, for this reason, I also volunteered in one of the camps during my research.

»I think, as academics, we really must reconsider how we do research and the ways in which we produce knowledge. I believe it must be much more participatory. These are some of my methodological questions and, for this reason, I also volunteered in one of the camps during my research.«

Could you describe what these camps are like – and what did you volunteer to do?

On the Lesvos island, there are three camps for asylum seekers: Moria, Karatepe and Pikpa. We all know Moria. Karatepe is a much smaller camp mainly organized by UNHCR and city officials. Pikpa camp is organized by a voluntary organization called Lesvos Solidarity, which has been providing support to refugees since long before 2015. Lesvos Solidarity also works through a long history of migration as many residents of Lesvos were once refugees from Anatolia – I mean their parents and grandparents. I know and worked with the Pikpa team for many years now. Pikpa camp hosts about 85 people who are the most vulnerable. It has no connection to state authorities and organized completely by volunteers. It is a very small space with limited capacity, so the number of residents is very low. I volunteered for Lesvos Solidarity and worked at the camp regularly. I did not do interviews with residents of Pikpa.

You separated this?

It’s not necessarily a separation. In participatory research as your methodology, your daily life becomes a part of the research. You’re with people. Every day when I returned from Pikpa, I would take notes about what I saw, what I experienced, and how I felt. I did not want to make people feel like they were the objects of my research. On Tuesdays, I worked at the kiosk and distributed toilet paper, shampoo, soap, and things like that. I had the chance to talk to more
than half of the residents about their everyday lives. I never directly asked questions. I went along with the narratives they picked for the day. I’m extensively trained on ethics in the field. But they might not be aware of this or feel safe enough to trust me. Such issues of ethics in fieldwork must be recognized and negotiated on a daily basis. When they asked me about my academic work, I was always honest and open about it.

What have you discovered about the cultural norms of the young Afghan men so far?

This is a bigger discussion and I think I am still learning. Afghanistan is not a monoculture and includes many different ethnic and religious identities such as Pashtuns, Hazaras, Tajiks, Uzbeks and many others. There are also different languages like Pashto and Dari. In Europe, we speak of Afghanistan very generally without really knowing these differences and the histories of violence they embody. Therefore, experiences of gender and sexuality also differ among men from Afghanistan. Though it is safe to say that Afghanistan is overall a very patriarchal society and male dominated. When these men leave Afghanistan, they do not leave these cultural norms back at home or at the borders. They carry their values on gender and family with them most the time and struggle with it. But one of the reasons I was keen on working with young Afghan men is that I always thought and observed that their experiences were somehow different from men from other countries in the region, say Syrians or Iraqis – this is still very hard for me to explain.

The difference also comes from the fact that there are a lot of single young Afghan men traveling alone without their families. This is sometimes a burden for them, but it also allows them to meet many different people on the road. Each narrative is unique.

»The difference also comes from the fact that there are a lot of single young Afghan men traveling alone without their families. This is sometimes a burden for them, but it also allows them to meet many different people on the road. Each narrative is unique.«

As they’ve been on the road, they find themselves at a crossroads in their life. So this is a very special point in their life regarding their identity?

Many young Afghan men hang out with European volunteers and spend a lot of time with them. Some are even involved in romantic and intimate relations. Through these encounters they are confronted with new aspects of their identities. They can sometimes be emotionally challenging or very empowering moments. But my comments should not be understood to mean that when Afghan men meet »the new«, they change for better or worse. That approach risks further stigmatization of refugee men and their cultures. I am merely looking at how they change.

For example, when we talk about LGBTI asylum seekers from the Middle East, we see how they can be criminalized in their home countries. While we want to ensure protection for them
in the EU, we should not instigate Islamophobia. While we do research on marginalized groups and advocate for their rights, we must be very careful to control where that discourse may take us.

In what sense is LGBTI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Identities a topic for you in this project?

My research is not focused on LGBTI groups, though to my own embarrassment, after conducting the fieldwork, I realized that at times I was also biased and did not really push any boundaries on sexual orientation. As a long time LGBTI rights activist in Turkey, I got very upset with myself, frankly speaking, because I was also sucked into the dominant patriarchal, heterosexist norms they embraced themselves with. All the men I talked to seemed to talk about their experiences as heterosexual men – of course not using these exact words but talking about being attracted to women. I never pushed these limits in the dialogues.

This also tells us something about the asylum processes and solidarity networks in places like Lesvos. There are very few volunteers who are able to support LGBTI refugees in the islands. There is no proper official organization that focuses on LGBTI rights extensively. There are no proper reach-out programs in the camps. The camps are also similar to where refugees come from, in terms of how bodies are monitored and controlled through norms. LGBTI people are very afraid to reveal their identities during their stay in the camp. As UNHCR and other protection institutions do not provide public data, we do not know how many people seek asylum on the basis of sexual orientation. Amid all the challenges the camps present, LGBTI people are pushed to the lower layers of vulnerability and no one really talks about them. I was upset because I am sure there are many LGBTI people in the camps. We just do not know about them and I could not be self-reflexive enough to see that in the field. At Pikpa camp, there were residents who identified as gay and trans, but even at Pikpa camp it was not easy for them to come out openly.

Moreover, if we look at the asylum application processes, we see vital problems, because there is no common asylum law even in one single country. One gay man I know from Syria was resettled in Amsterdam as a refugee. He is back at university and very happy there. However, from my work at Amnesty, I have also witnessed many rejections and deportations of Afghan gay men who sought asylum. There is no coherent protection program for LGBTI asylum seekers in Europe.

»Most asylum seekers in the camps are scared to reveal their identities. They might be ashamed as well if they do not have the tools to recognize their own identities or rights.«

And at the same time, the refugees themselves are ashamed to talk about it.

Most asylum seekers in the camps are scared to reveal their identities. They might be ashamed as well if they do not have the tools to recognize their own identities or rights. This is very
understandable. But most of all, in places like Moria camp, survival is of utmost priority, because their lives are at imminent risk. They do not have access to health care, asylum process, food, or shelter. None of the basic rights are available to them in daily life. They pick the battle to survive first. That does not mean their sexualities are erased or that they have no desires. No, many things are going on, but they are made invisible and not politicized.

Under such circumstances, would you talk about being gay and not being able to express your identity or would you immediately talk about not having enough food? Of course, you’re going to first talk about food. Of course, you’re first going to say that you have no place to sleep.

What was the situation like the last time you were there – in summer 2019?

That summer, when the arrivals started to increase, people were not given any tents and there were no shelter spaces left. Capacity at Moria is 3000 and in the summer, there were already 19,000 people living there. There weren’t even any tents for the new arrivals. Only blankets were given to many of them, especially to single people arriving. They would spend the nights rolled inside the blanket for many days.

People come to Greece with already established traumas from war or persecution. When they are forced to live in these environments, new traumas are added to their experiences. However, none of that gets recognized in their asylum applications. People escape from war in Syria or Afghanistan, but they are facing another kind of war inside the EU territories.

What do you know about the actual situation? In the more critical articles, it is said that – especially Moria has become one of the shameful symbols of the failure of asylum politics of the EU. What do you think is the most important thing about the situation in Moria now? How would you judge it?

Moria camp was a military facility turned into a reception center after the »crisis«. It has a maximum capacity to host around 3,000 people, but now there are about 20,000 people, and the olive grove surrounding the camp is also filled with tents and makeshift shelters. Refugees call this area the »jungle«. As many newspapers and reporters wrote before, asylum seekers define Moria as »hell«, »worse than Afghanistan«, some asylum seekers I spoke with say.

»Refugees call this area the jungle. As many newspapers and reporters wrote before, asylum seekers define Moria as hell, »worse than Afghanistan«, some asylum seekers I spoke with say.«

Inside Moria, there is a health clinic that has couple of doctors for the entire camp area. There is no proper food distribution. People wait about 2 hours for each meal and the food is not even edible. There are no proper toilets, mainly portable ones and there is one for each 200 people or so. There is limited access to clean water, let alone hot water. Shower areas are also extremely limited, usually with broken doors and there is no safety or privacy. Especially at
night everyone is scared to use the toilet, but especially women and children. Overall, the
camps are dangerous places as many fights also occur among the residents. Some voluntary
organizations or refugees try to organize classes to teach language or basic skills, but they are
always temporary. Therefore, they do not have access to education either. The list can go on
for pages and pages. In summary, there is no access to any of the basic needs of the people.
Now it is even worse due to recent circumstances.

There is no real garbage collection. When you visit the camp area, you see mountains of trash
and plastic everywhere risking the health of the residents. There are hundreds of people
already with pre-existing serious health conditions. In the days of corona, focus has been put
on access to health care, but it has been many months since human rights defenders and other
NGOs like MSF have called on authorities to warn them about potential infectious diseases in
the camps, due to lack of hygiene. People have been stuck in this situation for a long time
now, and their lives have been put at risk in Moria due to the EU-Turkey Deal.

The EU Turkey deal – you’ll have to explain this, please.

In 2015, as the numbers of arrivals in Italy and Greece towards northern countries started to
increase, the EU decided to take a number of measures to strengthen both its internal and
external borders. The summer of 2015 and the arrival of refugees initially created a sense of
solidarity across Europe. Germany played an important role to welcome thousands of
refugees. This welcoming approach did not last very long, as it stirred a lot of anti-refugee
movements. For the EU, external borders were always paramount, and many human rights
organizations defined it as »Fortress Europe«. However, these proved to be not enough to stop
migration. Quickly, internal borders such as the Croatian-Hungarian-Austrian borders within
the EU were closed; and to further strengthen the external borders, the EU started to make
deals with third countries like Libya and Turkey by way of externalization of migration.

Since the start of the war in Syria, people escaping the war first came to Turkey and then tried
to reach the northern European countries through Greek borders, because Turkey retains a
geographical limitation to the Geneva Convention. There are no sustainable solutions for them
in Turkey. The EU made a deal with Turkey to »hold« the refugees in its territories and
control irregular migration though land and sea borders. There are a number of promises in
this deal to comfort Turkey – such as visa reforms, EU accession process and a large sum of
funding to support refugees in the country. There were also outrageous elements in the deal,
for example, for every Syrian returned to Turkey, the EU promised to resettle another Syrian
to Europe. Almost none of these aspects of the deal worked, although Turkey did curb a large
number of refugees crossing the borders by effective pull-backs. The Greek side in this deal
was asked to keep the arrivals in the five hotspot islands until their asylum processes were
completed – which resulted in the increased numbers of asylum seekers held at reception
camps like Moria, Vathy and Vial. The EU-Turkey deal is neither an agreement nor a
convention. It is simply a statement and is has no force of international law. This is the most
interesting part of the EU-Turkey deal, as it depends on the »good will« of the parties
involved.

»The EU-Turkey deal is neither an agreement nor a
convention. It is simply a statement and is has no force
of international law. This is the most interesting part of the EU-Turkey deal, as it depends on the good will of the parties involved.<

Human rights organizations have been against it all along. Today, Turkey is protesting it by opening its borders, and Greece is demanding amendments to the deal.

What is the function of the so-called Hotspots?

Hotspots exist in the Mediterranean as well, but at the Greece-Turkey sea borders, it is five North Aegean islands: Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros islands. According to the EU-Turkey deal, Greece is required to keep all arrivals on the islands until their asylum application process is completed. Those who are rejected can be returned to Turkey only if they are on the islands. The ones who are moved to the mainland cannot be returned to Turkey according to the deal. Currently, there are around 40,000 asylum seekers in all five islands and all of them are way beyond their capacity.

What is the migration policy of the new Greek government?

In July 2019, there was a national election in Greece, and the conservative New Democracy party (ND) led by Mitsotakis won the majority vote. Golden Dawn, the extreme right-wing party, could not get a seat in parliament this time, but most of their anti-migrant rhetoric was already in the election campaign of New Democracy that claimed it can fix the economy and control migration. Greek people are not overwhelmingly anti-migrant actually, but they were fed up with the austerity measures and EU completely leaving Greece alone on migration issues. We do not have time to expound on this here, but when you look at the recent history of migration and economy in Greece, voting for ND does not make any sense, but they did.

New Democracy’s main argument is to control migration by strengthening the borders, border security is equaled with national security – making migration a security concern. As soon as ND came into power, it initiated a number of actions to strengthen borders and change the asylum law to speed up the return of asylum seekers to Turkey. Greek authorities believe more than half of asylum seekers in Greece are just economic migrants and therefore do not have the right to international protection, such as Afghans. The new law that took force on January 1, speeds up the asylum applications by skipping some steps in the processes and limits access to translators. Basically, the new law violates each asylum seeker’s right to individualized, effective and fair access to asylum application procedures. Before the corona outbreak, Greece claimed that it would return at least 10,000 asylum seekers back to Turkey. We’ll see how that goes. I think currently Turkey is not accepting returns due to coronavirus.

Their second main proposal was to build closed camps to hold asylum seekers during their application process. Initially, they claimed these would be completely closed, then they changed their rhetoric and claimed these camps would allow »controlled« entry and exit. No one knows what that means, but acknowledging the challenges of Greek bureaucracy, these places will become detention centers.
In November when the government announced the plans for closed camps on the islands, the people on the islands – Greek locals – rejected the proposals and wanted the islands to be decongested. They want asylum seekers to be transferred out of the islands. They started protests claiming, »we want our islands and our lives back«. New Democracy, to push the construction of the camps in Lesvos and Chios, sent hundreds of riot police with army vehicles and machinery to the islands. That instigated clashes between the locals and the riot police for several days in late February 2020 when the police used excessive violence, tear gas and water cannons against its own citizens, who were protesting the constructions. Finally, Athens was forced to pull back the riot police and restart negotiations. I think they did not expect such a strong and persistent resistance from the locals.

**Were these demonstrations organized by the locals successful?**

… for a moment, yes. At least the locals felt that way. However immediately after these events on February 28, the President of Turkey announced that it would open its borders to Europe, and it would no longer stop refugees from leaving. This started a whole new ordeal to justify all the actions of the Greek government and motivated the anti-migrant groups to disseminate their hate rhetoric and attack people on the islands.

The closed camp clashes, the corona outbreak and Turkey opening its borders, all merged in one moment and resulted in the increased human rights violations against refugees on both sides of the borders.

Right before the emergence of corona and Turkey opening its borders, Mitsotakis spoke to the public to persuade people about the necessity of the closed camps and established a relation between corona and migration. He basically said that increased border security and closed camps are a necessity to stop corona from entering Greece. Of course, the first cases of corona in Greece had nothing to do with refugees. However, he presented refugees as biological weapons, who would come and infect all Greeks. This fear is still strong in Greece and once the restrictions due to corona are lifted, I worry a lot about the policies that will be implemented about refugees.

»Of course, the first cases of corona in Greece had nothing to do with refugees. However, he presented refugees as biological weapons, who would come and infect all Greeks.«

When Erdogan claimed to open the borders, some Greeks started to write »corona is coming« in social media. The evil spirit between Turkish and Greek borders has a history much beyond the limits of our discussion, but Greeks (not all of course but the general public) united under the claim »Greece Under Attack« and »I stand with Greece« when Erdoğan opened the borders.

During these days, both on land and at the sea borders, we saw a huge increase in anti-migrant groups attacking refugees, journalists, and volunteers working in NGOs in solidarity with the
refugees. Many volunteers and journalists had to leave the islands to protect themselves. There was also confirmed news that some members of the international neo-Nazi groups from Austria and Germany arriving in Lesvos to support anti-migrant groups, though they disguised themselves as journalists.

The Greek government was long trying to reduce the presence of NGOs and humanitarian groups in the camps through new legal changes. However, with the corona outbreak they did not even need new laws and ordered all the humanitarian organizations to leave the camps for health reasons. Some of the government staff and a limited group of NGOs are still there, but even the outbreak, there was not enough support.

What does the threat of Corona mean for the people in the camps now?

The Migration Minister Mitarakis rephrases »Stay home« and orders camp residents to »stay in camps«. Several weeks ago, the government »closed« the camp areas. Camps like Moria with their surroundings are not places where you can lock down, as they do not have proper entrance points, so this rule means more policing of the camps.

Asylum seekers are not even allowed to walk around the camp area. They are forced to remain within the camp – if possible, in tents – with 20,000 people in Moria. Last week, a police car patrolling outside the camp made announcements from speakers to remind the refugees to keep physical distance. Sounds like the worst joke ever. There is no space, regular water or electricity in the camps. In containers that are made to house 6-7 people, there are at least 20 people. They have to wait in long lines for food or to use the toilet. Therefore, I do not know how people can keep physical distance as ordered.

The Greek authorities claim that they are making medical facilities in hotspot camps, but in the case of an outbreak there is no way these spaces would suffice to deal with the situation. They are also handing out brochures to asylum seekers in multiple languages on how to protect themselves. The camps are becoming more and more like a black box. For example, lawyers in the islands do not have much access to detention centers in the camp.

»In Moria camp, refugees are also organizing themselves and using whatever tools they have to try to protect themselves against the virus. A small group of refugees formed a workshop with the guidance of an Afghan pharmacist, and they are sewing face masks from whatever clothes they find.«
they find. They are left to their own devices, but this is not new. They are doing their best to stay alive.

There are now two camps in the Greek mainland close to Athens – Ritsona and Malakas camps – with asylum seekers, who tested positive for Covid-19. Last week the total number was 28 asylum seekers. The government put these camps under quarantine. We do not know exactly what the conditions are or what additional measures are being taken in these camps. The government policy is to close these camps, so that there is no risk of infecting the general public, but it seems like they do not care about what happens inside the camps.

After Turkey claimed it will allow refugees to exit its borders, the Greek Prime Minister announced that as of March 1 they will suspend asylum applications and anyone who enters Greece »illegally« will be returned to their countries of origin. This decision was both the violation of the Geneva Convention and the non-refoulement principle. On April 1, this decision was reversed, and it was noted that the applications of people who entered in March will also be accepted. However, at the moment, all asylum application processes have been slowed down or stopped in Greece due to the coronavirus. The arrivals are given a document to apply to the asylum office, but that office is closed until at least May 15.

Also, the government has assured the public that any new arrivals on the islands will not be taken to the camps and will be kept in isolation. Some of the arrivals were taken to the mainland, to the Malakas and Serres camps, but there are still a couple of hundred people in Lesbos and, for them, the isolation is more like a detention in an open outdoor space without access to shelter or food.

I am pointing out the problems that exist with the Greek authorities, but surely the EU authorities must also be held responsible. Even if Greece wanted to do the right thing, they do not have the resources. When it comes to protecting the borders, the EU is ever-present. When it is about protecting the most vulnerable, the EU has been absent. With the presence of the coronavirus, not only external but also internal borders of EU have been closed to a certain extent and many EU countries have suspended the resettlement process.

EU Commissioner Johansson has been trying to persuade EU member countries to take responsibility, especially as regards the resettlement of 1,500 unaccompanied minors in Greek camps. It seems like ten countries have said yes, but since the coronavirus outbreak, it has become almost impossible. This week, it is expected that about 12 children will be moved to Luxembourg and some to Germany. Evacuation of all camps under the current circumstances is not easy, but as many health experts in Germany argue, there might be ways to transfer unaccompanied minors.

> What the EU does not understand is that, by denying refugees and asylum seekers their basic human rights and access to their economic, social and cultural rights, they are denying the future of Europe. This is a simple fact. The coronavirus once again has shown us how
fragile the EU is. And most importantly, refugees are part of our future and they must be part of the solution.

«

What the EU does not understand is that, by denying refugees and asylum seekers their basic human rights and access to their economic, social and cultural rights, they are denying the future of Europe. This is a simple fact. The coronavirus once again has shown us how fragile the EU is. And most importantly, refugees are part of our future and they must be part of the solution.

There are good examples too. Portugal decided to treat all asylum seekers with pending applications as permanent residents at least until the summer to ensure their access to health care.

Coming back to your own perspectives and to your research project, what’s next?

This spring I was planning to reach out to Afghans in Berlin and see if I could also do further fieldwork here. This is impossible at the moment. I am currently staying home and monitoring the islands from here. I follow the developments in Greece daily, but I am not sure if I will be able to return this summer to continue my research on the islands. Greece rightfully has closed its borders to travelers like any other place. I must add that it is not possible or humane to continue »business as usual« under the circumstances we are living in. Under these circumstances, I would be open to revise my research questions and find alternative ways to continue my work. Right now, I am doing my best to analyze my findings from the past summer and closely follow the situation of refugees in Greece.

ABOUT

Begüm Başdağ defines herself as a feminist cultural geographer. She comes to the table with a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds. She has a BA in Sociology, an MA in Urban and Architectural History, and a PhD in Geography. Her methodology and theoretical framework are highly influenced from queer theorists like Laurent Berlant, Jack Halberstam, Jose Esteban Munoz, Sara Ahmed and Judith Butler. While she has continued to teach in these fields after graduate school, she also worked full time for Amnesty International as a campaigner on human rights. Currently, she is an Einstein Fellow at BIM at Humboldt University. One of her many ambitions is to bring academia and activism together in theory and practice. It is crucial that her academic work pushes boundaries and challenges the ways we engage with the world.

If you have any questions, you can contact Begüm Başdağ: bbasdas@icloud.com
To support refugee right activists, Begüm Başdağ recommends making donations to Lesvos Solidarity: lesvossolidarity.org

Wolfgang Farkas is a journalist and author and works as a free editorial associate at Berlin Institute for empirical Integration and Migration Research (BIM).

Proofreading: Veronica Trespalacios