

Paper Presented

COST IS0803

Remaking eastern borders in Europe: a network exploring social, moral and material relocations of Europe's eastern peripheries

WS1: Eastern peripheries

**On the Road: Eastern Peripheries in Everyday Border Crossings**

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**Proposal for the meeting or other role at the meeting:  
"Crossing weekly for gambling: Casual housewives' adventures to Bulgaria"  
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The paper is not aiming to attempt to examine another sad story on border crossing. But instead, The paper is attempting to find the way /mechanisms of weekly border crossing in the sake of a gamble party (a quick and satisfied one) to the other side, to Bulgaria, among Turkish middle age and middle class women. Unknown numbers of women cross the border every week to Bulgaria's peripheral border villages for gambling (even to stay in small holiday motels, which some of them are outmoded); and keep up their gambling-closing during the whole weekend-s, and return to Turkey by losing or earning some pocket money for their pleasures. They are seen either as tourists or foreigners or illegal, they have some legal/informal ways/papers/bribes etc. to be seen as legal; although they are spending huge money and satisfying themselves in a forgotten corner; they are still unseen by sociologists and even by officers of both sides. I will follow their track to Bulgaria, and I will seek to find who they are and who is arranging/driving/manipulating the gambling parties for these old ladies: How did they meet with each other, how they are coping with the money they loose or win in a foreign country; and how they qualify the experience and adventure of crossing borders weekly, as 'normal' travellers? Moreover: Are they smuggling some little goods, bringing some specific things for their relatives or vice versa? How do they cope with all the state issues around them and the state mechanisms, as old fashioned ladies; how do they question and explain themselves the belonging and identity mechanisms, when are they arranging a(n) (il)legal gambling for the weekend-s to come?

"Crossing weekly for gambling: Casual housewives' adventures to Bulgaria"

**(Draft paper; please do not circulate/cite without permission)**

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First of all I apologize that I cannot present the paper, which I promised before. The reason for it is that my University because of some bureaucratic limitations suddenly disrupted my research project. Considering the limits of my research, I decided to convert and expand my presentation on the border crossing issues to the same field in Thrace border. All the cases are based on my fieldwork in Thracian borders of Turkey, in Edirne, between January and June 2010.

Edirne (situated in the triangle formed by the borders of Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria) has a remarkable importance for its territorial place. The city and landscape has been used as a passage both metaphorically and materially. A nationalist Turkish poem indicates that the motherland landscape of Turkey extends "from Edirne to Ardahan", and the latter has always been a city to be crossed, on the way to "Europe," by legal and illegal trade of humans, labour and goods, under all political regimes, from Ottoman Empire to neo liberal times.

In this paper, I will discuss more on how the border-crossing make the border's itself legible instead of how the Thracian border is used and abused by smugglers by the historical background.

This presentation is focusing on who can cross the border and how? Anderson points out that "Borders and their adjacent regions constitute gateways and opportunities as well as barriers; state controls over entry and exit seem to be under growing pressure" (Anderson, 2001: 2).

We know that the more the border is though, under control and high, the more it brings money. We heard that FRONTEX was called to duty on November, especially

to prevent the migration in the Greece-Turkey border, and so to make the border uncrossable.

Why does this matter? In the last decade, while ‘European Union member countries gave the growing attention to migration and border management, and had reinforced the control of the external border of the EU’ (Cassarino, 2006: 8; Aas, 2009; DeBardleben, 2005), Turkey uses it only as a path to cross for the last 10 years. Turkey’s borders are seen only as a ‘crossing road’. And the conversations about its borders are combined only with the subject of illegal migration to the European Union.

By following the main idea of border crossing practices; I will present and discuss two cases: Gambling women’s border crossing adventures and the main rhetoric on human smuggling techniques in Thracian border.

The aim of these paper is neither to generalize and nor to purpose the uniformity of a unique border region’s findings to all borderlands of Turkey or even all Thracian border. But this paper concentrates on ‘political economy’ with an inductive approach, which focuses more directly by investigating the mechanisms of border crossing, to question the ‘selective permeability of state borders, their differential ‘filtering’ effects, and the sustaining mechanism of state power’, by following Anderson’s proposed (Anderson, 2001:2).

The main questions are: What are the materiality and practicality of the crossing and who help the people cross it? How does the people bargain with the state and the officers when helping legal and illegal to cross; and who arranges the contacts with the “official”? What are the border’s rules and who works for whom? How and why does the border become strict and melt? Therefore, I will discuss the barriers, corridors and holes on the daily border crossing that are hindered on the Thracian borders of Turkey.

In this paper, I will focus on the legitimizing aspect of the border via these two cases.

I will attempt to claim that both the human smugglers and gambling women make borders legible since they are aware of the rules to obey in order to cross the border, because the state's rules may be affordable but also negotiable. Also, I will focus on the mechanisms to use money to dissolve the border legally and illegally.

Therefore, I will focus on the mechanisms of crossing the border legally and illegally, and how the rhetoric on the border crossing re-constitutes 'the everyday practices of bureaucracies and the discursive construction of the state in public culture' as cited by Gupta (1995: 375). Moreover, I will attempt to follow Wolf's invitation on 'who controls what and who control whom' (Wolf, 2001: x) to investigate the power relations.

### **Greece-Turkey Border:**

The first unseen history is the crossing from Greece to Turkey during the Second World War and after, re-unify the family. The National Intelligence Agency of Turkey helped the people to cross the border illegally and helped them to settle in a land and/or accommodate at a job, they helped them also to find a property, by using them as an agent, as a chaser to prevent the local smuggling between 1938 and 1950.

The Greek border had no gendarmerie till the Cyprus' quarrel in the seventies. But after the Cyprus quarrel, the border zone became more stressful and colder, filled by gendarmerie. Enez's locals describe these times as:

*"We did not have any wire or strict control point till 1972, even during the Cyprus quarrel, we controlled the border by ourselves, but actually we never feel hostility against to the other sides' people. How can we? We shared our rakias and meals, fishes for years and years. But after then, gendarmerie came and the border became tense, the borderline cleaned from locals"* (Enez, Greece border, 2010 August).

After the fascist Coup d' Etat in Turkey (in 1980), the road was blocked and those times the leftists used the Meric River to cross by swimming to reach 'the democracy' in Greece and/or sometimes other western countries.

During the unnamed war in Turkey in the 90's, the quarrel between the Turkish army and PKK deployed hundreds and thousands of people in South East. The border became then a way to access the Lavrion Refugee Camp, mainly for Kurds; but also for some transnational refugee flows during 90's. Refugee flows were increased by that time; hundreds and thousands of them were smuggled by human traffickers and their networks. (Apap, Carrera and Kirisci, 2004:17-18).

### **Bulgaria-Turkey Border:**

The 1878 Ottoman Empire's recognition of the sovereign nation state of Bulgaria put an end to 482 years of Ottoman presence and drew the first physical border between

the two countries. In the next 120 years, the border shifted five times, with the last correction in 1997, making this the most fluid political boundary in the Balkans.

In 2007, Turkey's border with Bulgaria marked the new edge of the European Union. On a psychological level, the collective memory of the Bulgarian presence has been passed on from one generation to the next, along with its distrust and hatred towards our Soviet neighbours to the north. This collective frustration was socially acceptable before the fall of Soviet. It is now politically incorrect, yet alive even if unspoken, nestling in the minds of most Turks. The Republic of Turkey used this conflict in their propaganda, letting the northern border embody the battlefield between Islam and Christianity, good and evil, us and the enemy. But in any small investigation inform us, that the border was not so solid and opaque to pass during Iron Wall times. Stories on both sides "how this man and girl loved each other and cannot get engaged since the regimes", "how they send to other side's komşus some luxury goods by little kayiki" and "How they follow their relatives faith day by day in a communist regime" create a remarkable base to ask some further questions on.

The Thracian border between Turkey and Bulgaria, became a crossing platform during the sixties and seventies by leftist parties' to cross towards Soviet Bulgaria; especially a specific field on the north of Turkish Thrace was a free crossing point for the leftists, controlled by both Turkish communists and Bulgarian secret agency.

In 1989, the Bulgarian –Turkey gate crossing became a scene to settle the Bulgarian born Turks, hundreds and thousands crossed in one day without having a proper paper. At the beginning of nineties, the holes and paths were closed, and the gate became the only way to cross, at least in the 90ties, the states were seen as the only authorities to permit the border crossings. During all the nineties, the flows from Bulgaria maintained in and out.

Nowadays, to have a Bulgarian visa is really expensive since the Bulgarian border is more solid and unpleasant against Turkish people. People in the Turkish side of the border are murmuring and gossiping on their European identity and on how they did the right by joining the European Union, based on their origin and their pasts.

### **Case1: Gambling women's crossing:**

When I have heard about the gambling women at fist, I thought that they were some posh, bored and stone-rich women in quite old ages from rich families. I thought that they might be travelling with their husbands or some possible lovers to reach some luxury facilities away their homelands.

I made the travel together with them only twice, from Istanbul to Svilengrad. Although, my observations are not sufficient to calculate the whole economic budget of all the expenses, I will try to calculate the total cost of it for both Turkey and Bulgaria.

I applied in 2010, July, to a luxury tourist tour to go to Svilengrad and I have been informed to prepare my documents to get my visa. Although my past experiences to Bulgaria for some couple of conferences and some fieldwork trips whispered me that the visas to Bulgaria would take quite long time; surprisingly the tourism agent called me in a week announcing that my visa for 90 days was ready. The tour for one day was 45 Euros all included, all meals and refreshments in the casino. Tours were organised regularly and daily on Saturdays and Sundays.

The travel started from Istanbul to Svilengrad, only 7 kilometres to the border in Bulgarian side, in the early morning; a full of bus of women and some guys; all the people seem very familiar to the environment. After a non-stop trip to a 4 stars hotel (Hotel Star Princess Casino) they disappeared until late time. The women were 35 to 60 years old age, in casual dresses, quite middle-classes types, however the men were older and anxious for the money they spent for the travel and some other pleasures.

The travel took 3 hours after Edirne, since we spend 2 hours in Kapikule Gate, with some debates with custom officers; but we were never been asked/or waited in the Bulgarian side. Turkish custom officers were chatting with us, about which casino is charging what amount and what amount of their benefits totally, how Turkey is loosing its honour and money via such tours out of Turkey for gambling. Our bus driver, after giving a quick smile to the officers promising some things for our return;

took us to the bus by swearing and murmuring some words on their money-lover habits. The tradition to stop in the nearest gas station, to make the tank of car full after crossed the border, was going on.

When we arrived at the Casino, the drivers disappeared. I learned that they were meeting their relative and-or some old friends during our fest. On the road back to Turkey, we departed after eleven o'clock at night; the bus stopped on the road of the border gate and both drivers and travellers shopped enough amount bottles of whiskeys and some goods since the Turkish custom regime limited tax-free goods in the Border Gate. Since the new custom law permits to buy duty free goods only for people who stayed 3 days in abroad; buying the things in duty free zone was even impossible. Some of the black nylon packages disappeared in the custom compartments suddenly in the Gate, and the drivers maintained to swear. We arrived at Istanbul about 4 o'clock in the morning.

My second application was for some couple of days for the same casino in August. The tours were departing on Wednesdays and Fridays regularly. I was charged only 175 Euros for 3 nights 4 days trip, including all the luxurious, all transfers, city tours, and all meals, saunas, swimming pools, drinks at hotel, and as bonus money 50 Euros to start my gambling habits. The travel agency offered me free transfer and accommodation, if I block 4000 TL (app. 2000 Euro) per people, and 5000 TL (app. 2500 Euro) per two.

Travel was usual: Chatting with custom officers, drivers' promises and smiles, to full the tanks after border, presents in black nylon package to custom officers, gossiping who did lost how much at the last trip, which Casino's gambling machines were old or fake etc. The profile of the travellers was the same, middle classes, middle age women, some couples and a few single men. I have learned that the men prefer to travel by their own or in shared cars in the sake of their freedom during their stay. All the gossips and talks were on "*Although Turkey lost her chance to hold the gambling market because of Bulgaria's hosting qualities; Turkey never accepts to be called as 'The homeland of illegality'*". They know that the Casino belongs to a Turkish firm, they are happy to be hosted on their own language and hospitality of Bulgarian young croupier (CANKIT as nickname). "*Although they know that they* (Bulgarian youths)



*are very hard workers, no matter how they feel themselves, since Soviets threaten them harshly".*

We should remember Carol Gluck`s words saying that the border crossings create both `the grammar of an *ideology of loyalty and a constructive discourse* of nation-state`s narrative` (see Deringil, 2002:15); what creates/legitimizes the state narrative here is the huge amount of money earned from gambling and more important, the political positions of the Turkish owners of these casinos. The Turkish casino owners are renowned and legitimized as professionals who found and run casinos in Turkey, Turkish Cyprus, Russia and in the Balkans.

How much do the professional casino owners earn via these regular crossings? The frequency of the day is about 800 people, in statistics. 800 people cross the border every day for gambling to the closest hotels, such as Casino Star Princess, Nymphes Princess Casino in Svilengrad, Trimonium Princess Casino in Plovdiv, by paying 50 Euros pp. pd. The amount of the payments of visa, duty free goods, some bribes to custom officers may reach 80 Euros as extra per person per day, except the gambling spending. The minimum amount of the cross border per person per day may reach 130 Euros, totally 104.000 Euros per day. We can guess that the total 250.000-400.000 or more Euros transfer daily for gambling.

## **Case 2: Human trafficking and its `facilitators` in Edirne:**

The second case is the human smugglers` network to Bulgaria or Greece from Edirne. I contact human smugglers in Edirne during my first fieldwork in June, and during my second one in Enez in the end of August. After my gatekeepers connected me; I interviewed two of smugglers in Edirne (on the road of Bulgaria) and two in Enez (on the road of Greece).

The smuggling area is described as *safe and easy*. Smugglers use the three ways to make the people cross: One is *Package technique*, second is *Shaking* and the last one is *kicking*. Package is to deliver the refugee by supplying his/her passport as French, Italy or German, *"...by taking he/she from Istanbul to deliver to the other side of border without any step in the land, safely"* (C. 45, human smuggler from 1994-95,

in Edirne, he arrested in Bulgaria at the end of August).

Total payment of the first is from 2500 Euros pp., and possible more. The tip of this technique is that, the package never arranges by the locals; but the all orders and roots come from upper bosses such as Istanbul and or Trabzon mafia. C. says *“If you are an enough important and a significant person, if you are worth to be taken into consider, already they will arrange for you the all things instead of us. We do not ask questions. Even our share is not as much as they’re charging. Sometimes the bosses send some particularly intentioned person to make them to cross the border. Even we know who is who, the business is as usual”* (C., int. in Edirne, in June 2010)

While Enez use the same techniques, the payment is slightly higher *“Because their travel road is quite luxury (by race boats to Greece), and the significances of the people are higher”*; A. says *“Whenever we heard an explosion or a political murder in Turkey, we saw the suspicious in a few days in the race boats, here”* (A. 40, Human smuggler from 2002, in Enez).

When I ask *“But how the people survive in a foreign country with a fake passport?”* the answers are *“It is up to your cost to the process. If you are worth to keep, you can survive”* (A. int. in Enez) and *“It depends why they want to keep on you”* (C. int. in Edirne). A. says *“Whenever we heard an explosion or a political murder in Turkey, we saw the suspicious in a few days in the race boats, here”* (A. 40, Human smuggler from 2002, in Enez).

The second way is *“to shake”* the migrants in-between two sides endlessly. After a migrants pay his/her bribe, they took him/her from Edirne, made him/her to walk 9 kilometres in 45 minutes by crossing the shallow water; let him/her to reach the other side. And then, they denounce the refugees to the gendarmerie, in order to get him/her for another shaking process. After the refugee or migrant is deported, the human smugglers contact the people in order to have another crossing. The payment is from 1000 Euros pp., C. said *“Daylight is more appropriate because there are thermal cameras in the border, and also two alarmed wires, but nevertheless, omit them, they can be turn off for some hours by depending of your amount of money to cross”*. (C. int. in Edirne). The crossing way is on the road of patrols, and spring and autumn

times are more popular than winter, because of the conditions of Meriç (Maritsa) River. C. says *“Some people from Agency know well to stop the alarm, by charging the money to do it”, and “To delivery to address is quite difficult, needs more attention, otherwise, without deliverance is easier”* (C. int. in Edirne)

A. insists that *“To cross via Enez is more expensive because Maritsa needs more consideration besides the sea patrols are more intentioned. The payment is higher since the local fishermen may engage the process”... When they arrest and return, the new crossing payment attacks. I have seen who crossed even 7 times”* (A. int. in Enez). Sometimes, gendarmerie catches the people on the seaside/riverside, or in the boat, which cannot run in any second; sometimes gendarmerie picks the refugees from water if they are lucky.

The other technique, “kicking”, starts when the all the shaking finishes; when the refugee spends all border budgets by shaking in-between two sides. C. says *“It is cheaper than the all, costs only from 250 Euro. I take him/her eve of the town or city, and show to the other side: you go walk, directly, swim by yourself, and find your own way”*. Most of them cannot success to cross the border” (C. int. in Enez).

Although formal Border Gendarmerie and Border Police statistics show the number of arrested in one year (in 2009) is 830 people in Enez, and 1200 people in Edirne, the EU statistics for illegal crossing the Greece border show *“In the first half of 2010 a total of 45,000 illegal border crossings were reported by the Greek authorities for all their border sectors. Greece currently estimates that up to 350 migrants attempt to cross the 12,5-km area near the Greek city of Orestiada every day reached at 15 October 2010), totally 63.000 illegal migrants in first six months”* ([http://www.frontex.europa.eu/newsroom/news\\_releases/art79.html](http://www.frontex.europa.eu/newsroom/news_releases/art79.html)).

What is the purpose of hiding counts? Both Turkey’s and Frontex’s and the EU’s counts are quite nebulous. The numbers of people who cross legally and illegally are counted altogether. Instead of individual illegal crossings, the numbers announced are about the total crossings, total smuggled goods and total legal and illegal migrants. Neither Turkey nor the E.U discloses their formal statistics. The fact that the statistics are hidden and sometimes exaggerated, feeds the negotiations about the amounts

dedicated to the border surveillance of Turkey and the E.U.

Let's calculate this for a small village. I will do it with a simple calculation and some simple statistics. Enez is a border village containing the Meriç (Maritsa) River Delta and its urban population is around 3500 people. It's a small village subsisting on agriculture.

Normally, there should be 3 times more border crossings than the ones caught (İçduygu, 2003). Therefore, we can say that with a population of 3500 last year, in 2009 there were 3000 crossings only from Enez.

If we count at least 500 euros per person, we can say that the money gained only from the Enez crossing is 1.5 million Euros a year.

Of course, the people of Enez did not get this revenue as locals. This amount shows how remunerating is the black market and the fact that a village with insufficient means to access the illegal networks cannot keep to itself this amount. Even though people of Enez know whom are those subsisting on this business, they are quite distanced to the illegal crossing business and neither they stand on the states side nor on the illegal traffickers' side. They explain the rise of illegal trafficking with "*the increase of problems of making a living*". Enez qualifies itself as "*The last ticket is issued here*".

With the law of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1981, numbered 17552, Enez was declared totally as a "Forbidden military area", and this ban continued until 2004. The life of this small town was ruined with the ban and every stranger coming to this town was interrogated. "*Before the military, there were no smuggling*" says one of the former mayors. But, the smuggling is only told as a narrative of the present. "*Between 1971 and 76, the relationships with the other side were very warm. There was fish smuggling but it was only necessity smuggling. Of course there was also big smugglings for sugar, gun etc. In fact we didn't need the military here. We asked it in 1975. Even in the political Cyprus tension, the conditions were not tense. The border was cut with a knife partly in 1980 and completely with the coming of the military.*" (M. 74. int. in Enez) says the former mayor. 67-year-old inhabitant says: "*The people*

*smuggling historical artefacts in the past and those smuggling people today are the same, but the circle is wider now.” (A. 67. int. in Enez)*

Those who help people to cross borders, the trajectories, and their homes are well known by almost everyone. In fact, everything is done in daylight. At nights, the traces and sounds of migrants become more visible, the car flows increase. The smugglers who shop in markets, pharmacies during their stay, hide themselves at night in their homes near the border, with their pockets full.

During my 10-day stay in Enez, the only foreigners interrogated were 4 foreigners staying in my small hotel. They were 20 years old, and they came a few days ago with their passports and their own car, from Edirne, naïve to begin their trip in Turkey in the archaeological relics in Enez. All the formalities and passports were legal and okay, but they were the only ones interrogated in the police station. The only ones who were advised to “Not staying too long in Enez” were these 4 young tourists.

### **Concluding Discussions:**

The researches about the border are based more and more on discussions about being banned on the border, benefiting of the border (Wilson and Donnan, 1998, Berdahl, 1999, Sahlins 1998, Vila 2003), and on the idea that the global system needs more and more state-borders (Anderson, 2001; Anderson and O’Dowd, 1999).

I will discuss more of Vila who claims that the border issue should be considered only as border-crossing, and that considering it as post-structuralist, hybrid and third country legitimises/degrades the border as a only-ethnographic-field (Vila 1999); Heyman who analyses how the border crossing creates a paranoid culture (Nunez and Heyman, 2007); who attires our attention on which classes take benefits from these crossings both in U.S.A and in Mexico (Heyman, 2001), and Wolf how the border culture that is fed by daily rhetoric is completely embedded by power (Wolf, 2010).

One of the cases of border negotiations here is legal, the other one illegal. Despite this, the crossing seen as legal is in fact an illegal committed by legal business practices, an illegal act made unseen. The companies transporting the passengers,

those who work as croupiers and workers in casinos, the travelers who buy black market alcohol to bring to Turkey two bottles more, the border officers who accept gifts from them, the small-scale retailers, boat captains, fishermen, and smugglers of last crossing who accommodates them, who sells goods to them, who accommodate them, who shaves them, who provides them food, are all little negotiators of a legalization process which is unspoken and unnamed. One from the gates the other one from the borderland, both crossings is a negotiable thanks to the enormous flow of money.

Here, I will ask whose crossing this crossing is: Who is making profits of it? You can look at this as an old fashioned contradiction, but the answer "It's totally the state" does not satisfy me. Yes, there are definitions of citizenship based on the rhetoric of smuggling, the difference between them and us. Yes, the border feeds itself with this rhetoric; the border becomes a kind of flux, a subject of negotiation, it strengthens the state and becomes legible. I will invite again the same old question: But, who is profiting that much of this situation? Who owns this enormous amount of money?

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