

**Ioannis Christidis** (University of Music and Performing Arts of Vienna)

## **SINGING AND DANCING FOR FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT RESISTING FORCED CONFINEMENT IN "HOTSPOT" CAMPS IN THESSALONIKI, GREECE 2016**

When the Balkan migration route was shut down, in March 2016, many of the migrants trying to cross the Greek-North Macedonian borders were trapped in the border area of Idomeni. Despite the mass struggle for freedom of movement that followed, borders remained closed. In May 2016 the Greek police forcibly transferred 15,000 people from Idomeni into twelve run-down refugee camps, consisting of abandoned military facilities and industrial warehouses, in the suburbs of the city of Thessaloniki in northern Greece. The attempts of forced migrants to move forward had been thwarted and furthermore, the living conditions in these state - and UN - backed camps were unimaginably grim. Soon, these so called "hotspot" camps became places of resistance.

The refugee experience in Greece is usually associated with forced immobility in camps, imposed by UNHCR regulations, by EU anti-migration measures, and by grinding asylum procedures. Forced migrants are pushed into a limbo state where the absence of basic human, civil and political rights renders them completely subject to state power, and often victims of unaccountable institutional violence (Ben Farhat; Blanchet; Juul Bjertrup; et al. 2018). Still, however appalling, this process of victimization and de-humanization constitutes only one side of the complex experience of forced confinement (Chatty 2014).

From an ethnomusicological perspective and based on fieldwork, documentation and activist engagement, I aim to highlight the existence and importance of music for opposing the abject conditions in the "hotspot" camps of Thessaloniki, where conventional avenues of political participation and public debate were restricted, as well as for the protests demanding freedom of movement. Alongside these demands, forced migrants, mainly from Syria, used the potential of music and dance to create conditions for political participation, enthusiasm and empathy (see: Turino 2008), finally shifting the narratives around refugees from vulnerability and victimization to individual agency and collective resistance.

### **References**

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**Ioannis Christidis** is currently a Ph.D. student in Ethnomusicology at the Institute of Folk Music Research and Ethnomusicology at the University of Music and Performing Arts of Vienna and a research fellow at the Music and Minorities Research Center. Based on field research on the musical expression of forced migrants from Syria within protests and life in refugee camps in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 2016, his doctoral work has grown into a multi-sited comparative research project that aims to examine the relation of music, policies, and intentional actions in the experience of forced migrants from Syria in various European cities. His main research interests include: music and minorities/migration; music and politics; and music and gender.