

A Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis of identification documents in the Greek asylum context

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BY: Christina Fakalou and Roula Kitsiou

ABSTRACT

Reading the asylum governance through its narratives (Bhabha 2013), this paper aims to theorize identification documents as part of the nation-state's narrativity performed through multimodal bureaucratic materialities. The contemporary narration linked to identification documents in the institutional space of asylum integrates an increasingly sophisticated and multimodal range of resources into its media content (Page 2018). Yet, these multimodal narrative productions are contextually situated practices and semiotic aggregates mirroring power relations and hierarchical positions (Milani 2017). Drawing on a critical multimodal approach to discourse analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021), we explore the multimodal composition of four identification documents provided in the Greek asylum context. This critical approach to their design unveils the dynamic interplay between the verbal and visual elements in performing bordering practices and constructing the specific identities/statuses of the 'asylum seeker.' Semiotically, this identity work entails the deployment of digital meaning-making elements such as color, emblems, images, writing, layout, typography, shape, and material. In this sense, third-country nationals seeking international protection are resemiotized within a national (i.e., Greek), regional (i.e., European), and global context. In this context, identification documents can be seen as small institutional stories that reproduce the biopolitics of the nation-state contributing to a banal national semiosis (Milani 2014) of social categorization along broader contexts of globalization and asylum.

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1. Introduction

The nation-state has recently invented national permission papers (Torpey 2000), including asylum identification documents, to regulate transnational movement. The “birth of the paper prison” refers to the national state’s issue of citizenship papers in the early 20th century, when national passports and visas came to be used due to growing international insecurity about identifying who belonged where (van Houtum and van Uden 2022: 20). Establishing uniform layout and features of these travel documents at the International Passport Conference in 1920 (League of Nations 1925), states have turned this temporary paper borders instrument into a norm that is guarded by writing technologies (pencils, computers) (van Houtum and van Uden 2022: 21). This yet under-researched, especially in the Greek context, bordering that precedes in-situ borders has had a significant impact in constructing irregular migration as a lack-of-permission-papers condition (the un-documented) and asylum-seeking as a permission-paper-seeking process.

In the context of asylum, biometric technologies are increasingly used to measure, analyze, process, and monitor applicants for international protection (Farraj 2011). As Marco Jacquemet (2020) cogently points out, in the established context of ‘Fortress Europe,’ the European Union and its member states impose spatiotemporal constraints extending beyond traditional understandings of borders and territory on individuals seeking international protection. The identification documents serve as discursive means for categorizing and bordering people based on their asylum profiles, a mixture of legal statuses and national origin which produces and maintains the discriminatory practices forming ongoing border biopolitics (Houton and van Uden 2022). Furthermore, as shibboleths of asylum regulation integral to the nation-state’s narration (Bhabha 2013), asylum-related identification documents are far from just lawful proof of identity, citizenship, and belonging to the nation-state. They mirror hierarchical positions forming part of the nation-state biopolitical¹ technologies (Foucault 2009). Within a state of exception (Agamben 1998)² these technologies aim to govern asylum bodies stripped of political and legal representation.

Current relevant research has engaged with the biopolitics of biometrics. Ajana’s study (2013a), for example, examines the Applicant Registration Card, made for persons applying for asylum in the UK, as a means of controlling migration and bordering management imbricated in the logic of exception. That is, as a locus of inclusive (in terms of accessing social services) exclusion (non-citizenship/alien). Cabot (2012), in

¹ As put forward by Foucault (2009), the notion of biopolitics denotes governmental technologies of power aimed at enacting control over the lives and bodies of human beings.

² According to Agamben (1998), the state of exception is suspending the rule of law on the grounds of protecting the state, thereby embedded in the form of an inclusion-exclusion relationship.

conducting an ethnographic examination of the pink card (*roz karta*), the identification document given at the time by the police to individuals seeking asylum in Greece, applied the governmentality and subject formation frames and highlighted them as a bureaucratic mechanism of regulating the applicants' mobility through the creation of limbo statuses of identity. Analyzed through the lens of biopolitics and border control, Rozakou's (2017) ethnographic study places the identification documents (*hartia*) provided to asylum seekers on the Greek island of Lesbos within the bureaucratic practices of state power.

Despite this important work, the study of the identification documents produced in asylum contexts has been less concerned with the discursive apparatuses through which the nation-state manifests its power and authority over marginalized social groups, such as the individuals seeking protection in its territory. Redressing this oversight, this paper examines four identification documents issued to asylum seekers in Greece as part of the Greek nation-state's biopolitical power performed through multimodal bureaucratic materialities.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. A social semiotic approach to multimodality

Reflecting the increasingly digitalized world generated by the advent of new technologies and globalization processes, meaning-making in contemporary texts is constructed and mediated through multimodality (Blommaert 2013; Blommaert and Rampton 2011; Milani 2013). Multimodality includes written, verbal, aural, gestural, and spatial modes, and different communicative media such as print, digital, or electronic (Cope and Kalantzis 2020; van Leeuwen 2017). Language alone is not the only important channel for creating and communicating meaning (Kress 2010). Discussing the varied forms of meaning-making expressed in texts in the digital age, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) insist that language is inherently multimodal as it "always has to be realized through, and comes in the company of, other semiotic modes" (Kress and van Leeuwen 1998:186).

Furthermore, within a social semiotic perspective (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021), multimodality emphasizes the specific contexts and purposes that shape the semiotic recourses used for meaning-making. According to Kress (2010:93), "meanings are socially made, socially agreed and consequently socially and culturally specific." In addition, Iedema (2003) stresses how different agents mobilize semiotics in bureaucratic representations that do certain things at certain times. This strong capitalization on the social character of meaning simultaneously acknowledges power implications shaped by the interests of the creator(s), ultimately contributing to serving social ends (Jewitt 2014).

Consequently, a social semiotic approach to multimodality stresses the agency or power of the sign makers in meaning-making (Jewitt et al. 2016). Finally, as Iedema (2003) points out, semiotic resources have ideological power, being appropriated into ways of organizing and legitimizing certain forms of social reality.

2.2. Identification documents as institutional ‘small stories’

Broadly understood, narratives are stories told by and about particular individuals (Page and Thomas 2011; Thomas 2016). Contemporary narratives are increasingly multimodal, integrating a broad range of linguistic and other semiotic resources (Page 2010), thus requiring a multi-semiotic analytic approach (Iedema 2003). The enhanced affordances of multimodality and new technologies have further challenged the very nature of the narrative, resulting in conceptualizing narratives beyond ‘fully formed’ to small stories (Page 2017). Within “the canonical end of the narrative spectrum” (Page 2018: 50), there is a tendency to define narratives restrictively, privileging, among others, the particularly long accounts of the past (Georgakopoulou 2016). By contrast, small stories stress the “gamut of underrepresented narrative activities” (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008: 381). ‘Atypical’ narrative examples range from breaking news to social media status updates and projections of future events, to name a few (Page 2018). We must add asylum identification documents (e.g., applicants’ cards, residence permits, passports etc.).

According to O’Toole (2018), it is essential to recognize the role of “institutional storytelling” in shaping personal narratives, i.e., the role of the narrative environments within which these stories are integrated. As part of the nation-state’s storytelling, as small institutional stories, identification documents play an essential role in the storied lives of on-the-move people, especially in the aftermath of increased worldwide human mobility. Thus, examining their structure and content makes visible aspects of institutional storytelling. In highlighting further the ways through which the dominant nation-states position migrants in-between-ness or what is referred to as the ‘third space’ scholars of language and migration (e.g., see Appadurai 1996; Bhabha 1994) Bhabha (2013: 3) have argued “to study the nation through its narrative.”

Focusing on the identity of people seeking international protection, as one of these narrative discourses articulated by the nation-state in the asylum context, allows studying how the nation-state, as an agentive social actor, positions semiotically individuals seeking international protection and, in so doing, asylum seekers become semiotically positioned. Notably, Bamberg (2011:213) argues that “narratives have proven to highlight and bring to the fore the relevance of differentiating and integrating a sense of self in the identity formation processes of institutional and personal continuities.” Yet, at the same time, new positions are simultaneously defined by these narratives at local and contextual levels and, more broadly, on a global level (Bamberg 2011).

2.3. Entextualization of identity narratives in asylum contexts

As the sociolinguistic literature (Blommaert 2009; Jacquemet 2009; Maryns 2017; Smith-Khan 2017) has well documented, identity narratives in asylum contexts are framed in the process of entextualization. Entextualization describes how textual and other semiotic materials are extracted and relocated into discourses involved in identity work. Therefore, entextualization highlights the role of institutional power in textual productions. Jacquemet (2011:481) underlines that entextualization is one of the nation-state's most potent structuring instruments as a gatekeeping mechanism. In this regard, identification documents in the asylum context are particular points of entextualization practices.

Nation-states' narratives in the context of asylum are primarily related to citizenship. As a form of membership in nation-states, citizenship is understood as status (Isin 2008). Milani and his colleagues (2020) note that scholars often take citizenship as status indexing social and legal bonds and determining rights and obligations of individuals vis-à-vis nation-states. Besides its broader social and legal dimensions, citizenship as a status also involves state discourses that define rights and obligations in specific contexts, such as asylum governance. Reducing citizenship to status is crucial as it strategically capitalizes on a normative framework that captures how 'Otherness' is represented in nation-states' narratives according to their (il)legal statuses linked to different entitlements and duties. Drawing on Alexandra Jaffe's comment to Blommaert's paper³ (Blommaert 2009:429), institutionally embodied narratives in asylum contexts entail processes of entextualization through which national boundaries are policed by controlling access to residency and citizenship.

As regards forced migration in contemporary Greece, asylum-seeking is managed through border control practices (Fassin 2011; Jünemann, Fromm, and Scherer 2017). While these typically manage asylum mobilities by intensifying surveillance and safeguarding territorial borders (Lax-Moreno 2017), language further constitutes an element taken up for regulatory purposes of control by nation-states (Jacquemet 2016, 2020). Specifically, nation-state-based institutional bodies are tasked with gathering and producing personal data on asylum seekers' identities that are ultimately transformed into official documents (Blommaert 2009; Jacquemet 2021; Spotti 2019). One of the by-products of this bureaucratic materiality (Hull 2012) is the identification documents (Ajana 2013b) which are progressively multimodal and technologically advanced (Page 2018). Yet, such bureaucratic documents are not simply formal instruments of banal paperwork but crucial semiotic arenas signaling positions of power (Milani 2017).

¹ A. Jaffe is one of the commenters on Blommaert's paper; her comment is embedded by the author in his paper (Blommaert 2009: 429).

The theoretical approaches mentioned above describe how the nation-state constructs and communicates narratives and discourses concerning identity. In this study, we draw on a critical multimodal perspective on narration (Page 2010) to unveil the dynamic interplay between linguistic and visual features in constructing legal statuses and identities through asylum documents. For this purpose, we use a critical multimodal lens (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021; Machin and Mayr 2012) to analyze the textual structure of four types of identification documents in the Greek asylum context. Our analysis aspires to contribute to the broader asylum-related research that aims at unmasking the technopolitical discursive mechanisms (Jacquemet 2015) employed by nation-states to regulate the individuals under their immediate control.

3. Methodology

Recognizing the social function of narratives in producing subjectivities and organizing them hierarchically through semiotic resources (Page 2010; Page and Thomas 2011), we have applied critical multimodal discourse analysis to the data (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021; Machin and Mayr 2012). More specifically, the data include four types of identification documents issued by the Greek state: (a) The (old / new) International Protection Applicant's Card, (b) the Residence Permit (for recognized refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection), (c) the Travel Document (for recognized refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection) and (d) the Temporary Protection Card.

In a Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CMDA) perspective, language and other semiotic resources are never neutral but always ideologically loaded, untimely reflecting existing social arrangements (Fairclough 2013; Machin and Mayr 2012; van Dijk 2015; Wodak 2018). Combining Social Semiotic and Critical Discourse Analysis tools, CMDA allows for a detailed analysis of how persons, events, actions, processes, and the world are represented in texts (van Leeuwen 2014). In this approach, discourses are considered to be mediated "through different kinds of semiotic resources which are shaped by power relations and ideologies" (Machin 2013: 347). By investigating the discursive processes through which meaning-making is produced and the ideological and sociocultural values it entails (van Leeuwen 2013), CMDA can unravel the multimodal elements appearing in identification documents that construct in-/ex-clusion narratives of the nation-state.

In the next section, we analyze the multimodal elements of these identification documents as part of the Greek nation-state's narrativity. In particular, we use the concept of social actors from van Leeuwen's (2008) critical discourse analysis; we also draw on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) visual grammar and Machin's multimodal discourse analysis (2016), taking into consideration their attention to

composition elements in meaning-making practices. Applying thus the concept of salience, we shed light on “how certain elements might be made to stand out” (Machin 2016: 154) and communicate specific ideas and concepts through color, typography, and layout. In addition, we have used the three metafunctions of language as adopted from Halliday (1973, 1978) and developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) and by Machin (2016). The representational metafunction involves how all semiotic resources simultaneously construct reality representations; the interactive metafunction concerns how semiotic resources establish social relations, and the compositional metafunction refers to how semiotics recourses organize information into coherent and cohesive whole (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021; Machin 2016).

4. Data analysis

The identification documents produced at different stages of the Greek asylum procedure simultaneously entitle and disentitle third-country nationals or stateless persons from certain rights, obligations, resources, and protection (Crawley and Skleparis 2018). Those entering Greece and wishing to apply for asylum submit their claims to the Greek Asylum Service, an independent authority responsible for examining international protection applications and issuing applicants’ cards. In collaboration with the Greek Police (Passport Offices), the Greek Asylum Service also issues residence permits and travel documents.

In the Greek asylum sociolect, the *International Protection Applicant’s Card*¹ is commonly known as ‘auswies’ (meaning ID card in German) or a triptych due to its material shape. According to the Asylum’s Service Announcement (June 29, 2021), the new asylum seeker card replaced the triptych,¹ which was used until 01/07/2021. The applicant card (Decision No. 4831-25/07/2013; Decision No. 22066-23/10/2020) is issued to those eligible asylum seekers upon their full submission of their claims before the responsible asylum authorities. It is valid for a period varying from one month to one year. Although it allows applicants to remain in Greece until their claims are examined, it does not hold the status of resident permits or travel documents. It proves that an individual is an asylum seeker and provides for a temporary healthcare number (Provisional Insurance and Healthcare Number/PAAYPA) and a tax registration number (AFM).

⁴ See the sample provided in the site of the Ministry of Migration & Asylum of the Hellenic Republic: www.migration.gov.gr/neo-deltio-aitoyntos-diethni-prostasia

⁵ See the sample provided on the site of the Ministry of Migration & Asylum of the Hellenic Republic: <https://migration.gov.gr/gas/aitoyntes-kai-dikaioychoi/deigmata-eggrafon/>

*Residence permits and travel documents*⁴ are issued to those applicants granted either refugee status or subsidiary protection (Decision No. 513542-12/09/2022: Decision No. 10302-30/05/2020). Recognized refugees can stay in Greece for three years with a residence permit. With travel documents (valid for five years for fourteen aged persons and above and three years for minors under fourteen), they can travel abroad, except for their country of origin. Whereas beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are allowed to stay in Greece for one year. They can also travel abroad, their country of origin included. These travel documents are valid for three years for persons above fourteen and one year for minors under fourteen.

The *Temporary Protection Card* resulted from the EU member states' joint initiative to respond to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. This emergency mechanism (Temporary Protection Directive 2001) offers displaced persons the same rights across the EU, such as employment, medical assistance, access to education, and housing. The temporary protection will be in place for one year (until March 4, 2023) with the possibility of automatic extension for up to this period. More specifically, on February 24, 2022, Russia began a full-scale invasion, resulting in millions of displaced persons seeking international protection. Building on the protection, responsibility, and solidarity space shared among its member states, the EU Council Decision of March 4, 2022, acknowledged Ukrainian nationals as visa-free travelers with the right to move freely within its territory for 90 days and enjoy their temporary protection rights in any member state they choose.

Those eligible for temporary protection include not only Ukrainian citizens but also third-country nationals who legally resided in Ukraine before or on February 24, 2022, along with their family members (Decision on the procedure of providing temporary protection residence permit in Greece 2022). According to the 2022 Decision on the procedure of providing temporary protection residence permits in Greece, applicants have to submit an online application on the Ministry of Migration and Asylum website, providing their personal information (e.g., name and surname, family names, entrance date to Greece, nationality, contact, and residence details). Subsequently, they must present themselves at designated offices across Greece to submit their claim fully. Therefore, from April 4, 2022, those eligible receive the temporary protection residence permit upon complete submission. The temporary protection residence permit does not hold the status of travel documents. Still, it allows the beneficiaries of such status to legally reside and freely move in Greece until March 4, 2023, with a view to a six-month automatic extension.

National legislation, informed by European regional and international law (Decision No. 4831-25/07/2013, Decision No. 22066-23/10/2020, Decision No. 513542-12/09/2022, Decision No. 10302-30/05/2020, Decision No. 172172-28/03/2022) define the content and type of the four asylum identification documents presented here. Regarding biographic information, they all display the Greek state emblem and the carrier's digital photograph and use bilingual (Greek and English) instructions. Standard features

include personal information (Latin transcription of the name, surname, nationality, and date of birth), issue validation, document number, and the issuing authorities). They also include the place of birth, except for the new asylum applicant's card and the card of the temporary protection beneficiary. The latter also contains a personal social provision number regarding healthcare (PAYYPA on the new applicant card and AMKA on the temporary protection card) and a tax number on the temporary protection card. They further include the website of the Greek asylum service alongside its Facebook page, its Google and Apple applications, and its logo. Like smart cards, they have built-in microprocessors that store digital fingerprints. Following the technological prescriptions of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), travel documents and residence permits include its logo and the three-letter country abbreviation for Greece (GRC).

Travel documents include a Radio Frequency chip storing digital photographs and fingerprints and a Machine-Readable Zone (MRZ). Apart from the triptych, the identification documents include gender, translated as sex and appearing as the first letter code (M for males and F for females) drawing from the Greek and English alphabet. Other than the new asylum seeker and temporary protection card, identification documents include the holder's or their custodian's signature for persons under 15 years old. The triptych, however, contains an instructions display banner to be followed by applicants. If applicable, the respective papers also state geographical restrictions, whether local (the new asylum seeker's card) or global (travel documents).

The triptych is a trifold, heavyweight, electronically printed paper, while its successor, residence permits, as well as temporary protection cards, are plastic and similarly sized. In terms of color, the triptych is beige and slightly opalescent blueish at the center, contrasting with the multicolored (red, white, and blue) new asylum seeker's card. The temporary protection card is also multicolored, having blue, yellow, and white tones. The residence cards are in the same format of saturated blue, pink, and white backgrounds. By contrast, travel documents are in the form of a booklet. Travel documents for recognized refugees are in blue, whereas the subsidiary protection beneficiaries are in green.

The biographical information follows a hierarchical order in the personal information (e.g., name and surname, date and place of birth, nationality, validity, etc.) being shown at the center of the documents. Similarly, the space for the applicant/beneficiary photograph is always placed on the right side of the documents, whereas the space for the signatures is on the left. At the upper side of the documents, the information related to their types (i.e., international protection applicant's card, residence permit, alien's travel document) and the geographical restriction in the case of travel documents. However, the new international protection applicant card has a geographical limitation at the bottom of the document. In the case of the new international protection applicant card and the card for displaced people from Ukraine, identifying information (i.e., asylum seeker, temporary protection) is positioned at

the lower side of the document, and the information about the issuing authorities is reproduced in both sides of the document. Finally, the MRZ is placed at the lower part of the residence permits and travel documents.

Multimodal construction of identities related to the asylum context is evident in the four types of identification documents provided in the Greek context. This is not only realized through language but also is enriched visually through accompanying semiotic recourses. Representational meaning is verbally achieved through the use of bilingual subtitles, such as INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPLICANT CARD, ASYLUM SEEKER, BENEFICIARY OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION, REFUGEE, SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION, B.I.P. (BENEFICIARY OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION) FAMILY MEMBER, REFUGEE F.M. (FAMILY MEMBER, F.M. (FAMILY MEMBER) SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION, CONVENTION OF JULY 28 1951, ALIEN'S TRAVEL DOCUMENT, and TEMPORARY PROTECTION, evidencing the use of English as lingua franca. Notable is also a normative contraction of gender which is afforded verbally through the word SEX and the use of the first letter code (M for males and F for females) displayed in all the documents except for the international protection card (old form). In the international protection card, we note the absence of a "none representation" option for gender. The verbal rendering of such identities seems to be matched visually by using the Greek emblem on the documents. By the same token, the asylum seekers and protection cards display the Asylum Service's website and the logos of its Facebook page, Google, and Apple applications.

Similarly, the GRC abbreviation and the ICAO logos are utilized in residence permits and travel documents, evoking state authority and control. Furthermore, the combination of red and white on the asylum seeker's card and blue and yellow on the temporary protection card are visually mobilized. In this regard, the red color on the asylum seeker card indisputably signals caution and/or danger, as in public warning signs (see also Kress and van Leeuwen's 2021 discussion on connotations regarding red color). Likewise, the blue and yellow color of the temporary protection card, provided in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, points to Ukrainian nationhood.

The identification documents also carry out interactive meanings foregrounding relations with the viewer. Verbally this relationship is performed by headings such as HELLENIC REPUBLIC, MINISTRY OF MIGRATION AND ASYLUM, ASYLUM SERVICE, INSTRUCTIONS, PERMIT, GEOGRAPHICAL CONTROL, and visually through the Greek state logo and the logos of other involved authorities. All these impress upon the international protection applicants and beneficiaries, together with the beneficiaries of temporary protection, of the presence, power, and control of the Greek state and its institutional bodies. The verbal and visual elements of these texts bring into being compositional meanings. At the same time, using the same format for the captions' typeface, size, and color contributes to a sense of coherence and uniformity.

The design of certain elements of these compositions makes them stand out. In visually judging the weight of the composition's elements, size, color, and framing are utilized to provide further salience to specific sub-groups and statuses within the larger group. Salience is evident by the eye-catching large size, in different variations, of the national emblem and the identity/identification headlines of the documents, such as asylum seeker, refugee, and so on. Regarding information placement, we note how particular elements are arranged on the left/right axis (the photograph is always positioned on the left side of the document). In contrast, other biographical data (e.g., name and surname, nationality, issuing authority) are placed at the center. Noticeably, some features (the Greek emblem, the headline HELLENIC REPUBLIC, MINISTRY OF MIGRATION & ASYLUM) are sometimes positioned at the top and other times at the center side of the documents (e.g., see the temporary protection and the new asylum seeker's card). Through the use of verbal and visual resources, thus, the identities of asylum seekers are entextualized as the issuing authorities extract biographical (name, surname, photograph, gender, citizenship, issuing authority, etc.) and biometrical data (fingerprints), which transform into official documents, be it the old and new international protection card, residence permit, travel documents, and temporary protection card. In this way, persons seeking international in Greece are resemiotized in the context of the legal process of applying for and granting asylum before the responsible state authorities.

In addition, a discursive form of inclusion and exclusion is evident, taking place through the narrative of deservingness as determined by the asylum law dictates. Individuals seeking asylum and beneficiaries of international protection have a rightful stay in the host society, deserving to be treated according to existing legal rights and obligations. For example, although identification documents provide unrestricted movement, they do so under specific conditions. The old/new international applicant's card, residence, and temporary protection permits are limited to Greek national boundaries. Furthermore, the GEOGRAPHICAL RESTRICTION section of the new applicant card highlights a restriction on the freedom of movement, albeit a local one (within the territory of Greece). By contrast, travel documents lift this geographical restriction as they provide traveling outside the Greek territory.

Yet, travel documents contain the stipulation THIS DOCUMENT IS VALID FOR ALL COUNTRIES EXCEPT XXX (THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN), which applies to recognized refugees. On the other hand, the stipulation THIS DOCUMENT IS VALID FOR ALL COUNTRIES, applicable to subsidiary status recognition, is inclusive because the country of origin constraint is lifted. As a result, people occupy a liminal position since the asylum identification documents construct different identity narratives ranging from those seeking to those "deserving" and granted international protection. Rights-based discourses, such as the provision of tax and healthcare number

displayed on the temporary protection permit and the temporary healthcare provision number appearing on the new applicant's card, mark a shift that disrupts both constraints and duties. All these produce complex power hierarchies of insiderness and outsiderness, mobility and immobility within and out of the nation-state.

When read together, we see how the semiotic recourses used in the identification documents provide an inventory of the nation-state through which various social actors seeking and granted asylum are represented. This is accomplished by singularity (i.e., international protection applicant's card, asylum seeker, temporary protection, residence permit, travel document, family member, refugee, subsidiary protection status). Individualization is also realized by the personal data included in these documents (e.g., name and surname, date and place of birth, document identification number, and so on). However, categorization co-occurs, as such persons in the asylum realm are being homogenized either culturally or biometrically (e.g., nationality, photograph, digital fingerprints, etc.). Along this line of representations, the nation-state has an agentic role which is also communicated symbolically (e.g., Ukrainians with the stereotypically yellow and blue color in the temporary card and the asylum seeker within a red frame suggesting danger), yet under the nation-state protection and control (e.g., the Greek emblem reproduced in the documents). In this way, the asylum seekers' identities are entextualized and resemiotized as the issuing authorities extract biographical (personal names, country of origin, gender) and biometrical data (digital fingerprints), which are transformed into official documents reduced in the context of the legal acts and processes within the asylum realm. Importantly, these representations constitute the gatekeeper's ways of narrating small stories of different asylum subjectivities and identities organized around a spatiotemporal past, present, and future (e.g., seeking asylum, granting international protection, traveling, having social rights, and specific obligations).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

By reading identification documents as 'small stories' (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; Georgakopoulou 2016), this paper makes a case for the extension of research on 'atypical' narrative examples (Page 2017, 2018) found in the institutional context of asylum. In expanding on and enriching the 'small stories' problematics, we pay attention to the social function of narrativity in doing identity work and performing relations of power (Bamberg 2011; Georgakopoulou 2020; Page 2010).

Focusing on four asylum identification documents drawn from the Greek context, we approached them as a *multimodal synecdoche* (Milani and Shaikjee 2013) of the nation-state, through which aesthetic materialities stand for identity and are constructed by socially positioned actors (van Leeuwen 2008). In this perspective, asylum identities are restricted to those deriving from legality, status, rights, and obligations result-

ing from them (Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Isin 2008; Milani et al. 2020). On a CMDA basis (Machin and Mayar 2012; Machin 2013; van Leeuwen 2012, 2014), we argue that the various semiotic meaning-making resources used in these official documents play a crucial role in the entextualization (Blommaert 2009; Jacquemet 2009; Maryns 2017; Smith-Khan 2017) and resemiotization (Iedema 2003) of different identities in the asylum realm within a national (i.e., Greek), regional (i.e., European), and global frame (e.g., country of origin, nationality). Essentially, individuals seeking protection are variously transformed from applicants and/or asylum seekers, to refugees, beneficiaries of a subsidiary, and temporary protection.

A broad range of semiotic meaning-making resources is mobilized to carry out visual statements and to communicate concepts and ideas relating to the social reality of asylum in Greece. Institutional multimodal realizations portrayed in the identification documents, thus construct the identity of international protection applicant/asylum seeker, of the beneficiary of international (either refugee or subsidiary status), and of the temporary protection. Following critical discourse analysts (Fairclough 2013; van Dijk 2015; Wodak 2018), we argue that they connote discourses underpinned by power arrangements. One such discourse concerns the we/other opposition, pointing to a banal nationalism (Billing 1995; Machin 2016; Milani 2017) operationalized to strengthen the Greek state and its institutions and Ukraine over 'mainstream' asylum subjectivities and define reality in these particular ways. Considering the compositional structures of the identification documents, we argue that the frequently found placement along the left-right, top-down, center-margins dimensions (e.g., Kress and van Leeuwen 2021; Machin 2016) has less analytical currency in investigations like ours.

At first glance, using English or even Latin transcriptions vis-à-vis Greek in the documents might be evidence of inclusive language use. And yet, it relates to dominant lingua franca ideologies (Milani 2014), ultimately erasing the multilingual realities in asylum contexts (Blommaert 2009; Maryns 2017; Jacquemet 2016). These observations resonate well with Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) and Machin (2016), arguing that every compositional element, color, and typography included is deliberately used to capitalize hierarchical discourses in, aesthetically, we would add coherent wholes.

Finally, Agamben's exception state concept leading to practices of inclusion and exclusion (1998) is quite relevant in exploring bordering practices. When applying that to the governance of asylum documents (Ajana 2013a; Cabot 2012; Rozakou 2017; Spotti 2019), we argue for a re-evaluation in light of the multilayered processes involving different degrees of control and securitization (Ajana 2013b; Jacquemet 2020, 2021). Based on critical multimodal discourse analysis (Machin and Mayr 2012; van Leeuwen 2008) and conceptualizing identification documents as 'paper prisons' (Torpey 2000; van Houtum and van Uden 2022), we have tried to demonstrate how the nation-state as a social actor enacts discursive bordering practices relating to asylum (im)mobilities

and social rights, albeit variously different. We conclude by arguing that identification documents are small institutional stories that re-produce institutional power, that is, the Greek nation-state. Thus, a critical approach to their multimodal construction serves to uncover hidden meanings of this bordering practice as part of biopolitics.

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AUTHOR

Christina Fakalou Ph.D. candidate in Sociolinguistics, Department of Language and Intercultural Studies, University of Thessaly, Greece.

**AUTHOR**

Roula Kitsiou Assistant Professor of Sociolinguistics, Department of Language and Intercultural Studies, University of Thessaly, Greece.

