

Article

# Bodies Folded in Migrant Crypts: Dis/Ability and the Material Culture of Border-Crossing

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**Abstract:** This article considers media narratives that suggest that hiding in trucks, buses, and other vehicles to cross borders has, in fact, been a common practice in the context of migration to, and within, Europe. We aim to problematize how the tension between the materiality of bordering practices and human migrants generates a dis/abled subject. In this context, dis/ability may be a cause or consequence of migration, both in physical/material (the folding of bodies in the crypt) and cultural/semiotic terms, and may become a barrier to accessing protection, to entering and/or crossing a country, and to performing mobility in general. Dis/ability and migration have not been associated in the literature. We adopt an analytical symmetry between humans and non-humans, in this case between bodies and crypts. By suggesting an infected, ambivalent, and hybrid approach to the human subject, the body-crypt traveling border challenges the essentialist dichotomies between technology and biology, disability and impairment. The articles and reports upon which we rely were collected through extensive searches of databases/archives of online newspapers and news websites.

**Keywords:** border-crossing; crypts; migration; dis/ability; narratives

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## 1. Introduction

The use of trucks in connection with migrants attempting to cross borders in Europe attracted international attention in late August 2015. A truck abandoned on a highway at the border between Austria and Hungary—a lorry for carrying refrigerated meat—was designed to prevent the leakage of cold air from the inside to the outside. This design also meant that no fresh air could flow from the outside to the inside. This design turned deadly when instead of frozen poultry, the truck was packed with living humans, migrants from Syria and other war-torn countries of the region, who were hidden inside the truck to facilitate their undetected crossing of borders. With the air conditioning off, the combination of summer heat and lack of fresh air quickly led to the deaths of all 71 migrants packed in the back of this transnational truck: a truck with Hungarian plates, bearing the logo of a Slovakian poultry company, with three to five Bulgarian citizens and one Afghani with Hungarian residency papers being arrested for belonging to the smugglers' group [1,2]. Only a day after the 71 migrants died in the back of the truck at the Austrian border, 81 escaped death in the back of a truck in Austria by managing, in the minutes before suffocation, to break open the truck door with a crowbar [3]. Still in late August of 2015, this time at the German-Austrian border, three children, found together with 27 other migrants in the back of a van, were transferred to a hospital in critical condition due to dehydration [4].

This article considers media narratives that suggest that hiding in trucks, buses, and other vehicles to cross borders has, in fact, been a common practice in the context of migration to, and within, Europe. We focus here on crypts within trucks and other vehicles used to hide migrants during border crossings. For a concrete case study, we introduce a sample of crypts in vehicles detected within the territory of Greece, a European country that has been at the center of attention regarding border-crossing migrants. The narratives that we present cover the folding of migrant bodies in vehicular crypts within the Greek territory and at the borders between Greece and its neighboring countries. According to De Coster [5], crossing the border zone implies the formation of new groups and subjectivities that no longer depend solely on ethnicity. In our case, the border witnesses a specific hybrid of the human body and technology (crypts within vehicles). This in turn creates space for questioning and redefining corporeality and the border itself.

Delineating and demarcating borders has always involved the use of material arrangements to check, control, and filter the flow of people. With regards to the EU borders, a suggestive body of literature has focused on the deployment of all kinds of state-of-the-art policing technology (e.g., [6–14]). Our article takes note of this literature but moves on to discuss the co-production of border crossing and the dis/abling of migrants. In this context, dis/ability may be a cause or consequence of migration, both in physical/material (the folding of bodies in the crypt) and cultural/semiotic terms, and may become a barrier to accessing protection, to entering and/or crossing a country, and to performing mobility in general. Dis/ability and migration have not been associated in the literature. Our article aims to problematize how the tension between the materiality of bordering practices and human migrants generates a dis/abled subject. We hope to assist scholars who study technology and material culture from humanities and social sciences perspectives—from History of Technology and Material Culture Studies to Science and Technology Studies—as well as researchers who specialize in Critical Disability Studies and Migration/Border Studies.

Neither machines nor mechanisms, crypts exemplify the most concealed and ephemeral aspect of the material culture of border crossing. Compared with the high-tech devices used to detect them (e.g., electronic thermal cameras that function as scanners of crypts), crypts represent a low technology. They perfectly fit the definition of what Zoe Sofia, following the historicization of technology by the likes of Lewis Mumford and the philosophization of technology by Martin Heidegger, has called “container technologies”. Containers are indispensable to life but go unnoticed, are devalued for supposedly being passive and feminine [15]. Containers are overshadowed by engines and related artifacts, which are perceived as active and masculine. Containers are usually placed in the sphere of consumption, considered unworthy of any production that is of any value. They are assumed to be utensils, not tools. Like all containers and artifacts devalued as passive-feminine, belonging to the sphere of consumption, crypts exemplify the part of technology that is indispensable yet invisible [16].

This article explicitly addresses the following questions:

- How do adjustments of bodies to material configurations make the human body migrant and, in this case, dis/abled?
- How does migrant life, circumscribed by its biological/social definition, become an object of contestation with regard to its adjustability and eventual dis/ability? More specifically, how does the independent subject become materially plastic and adaptable to a vehicular crypt and become dis/abled?
- How may attention to things like crypts encourage the conceptualization of dis/ability as a cultural category opposed to the biological, while preventing categorical ascription for certain classes of citizens (here, the migrants)?
- What is the role of gender in the adjustment of migrant bodies to vehicular crypts?

The research on migrant bodies and crypts that we present below is part of a broader research project, which covers a wide range of methods and artifacts involved in border crossing, from rubber boats used by migrants to fences used against them. In this article, we focus exclusively on the

understudied case of crypts because it offers an introduction to less well-known versions of the temporary or permanent disabling of migrants. We still lack an approach that links the material culture of border crossing to temporary or lasting disabling. As we see it, the coupling of things with the concept of *dis/ability* or *dis/abling practices* can help raise critical questions regarding the interactive shaping of material configurations and the human subject.

## 2. Searching for Body-Crypt Narratives

Those who chose to use (or were pushed to) vehicular crypts to cross borders came from the ranks of a migrating mass traveling through Greece. The year 2015 was marked by an explosion in the number of migrants who sought to enter Europe through Greece. According to the UN, as of December 2015, 816,752 migrants had entered Greece, most of them risking the journey by rubber boat from the coast of Turkey to Greek islands [17]. The migrant flow to, from, and within Greece actually began much earlier. For example, detections of migrants at the Greek-Turkish sea border doubled between 2007 and 2008 to 29,100 clandestine border crossings. Detections were mostly reported at six Greek islands close to the Turkish coast: Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Patmos, Leros, and Kos [18] (p. 12). Earlier in the 21st century, the land borders between Greece and Turkey and Greece and Bulgaria had received the most attention. Amidst a constant migration flow, decrease in one area was usually combined with an increase in another. For example, a 40% drop in the flow across the Greek-Bulgarian land border and by 16% at the Greek-Turkish sea borders between 2008 and 2009 was coupled by an abrupt increase in clandestine border crossing at the Greek-Turkish land border [19] (p. 29). In the following year (2010), Greece became the main entry point for migration into the EU, with Turkey being the main transit country for migrants [20] (p. 10).

The articles and reports upon which we rely were collected through extensive searches of databases/archives of online newspapers and news websites. The choice of these news sources rests on two factors: (1) their geographical proximity to border zones, and/or (2) their substantial circulation in Greece. Articles were selected (a) reporting about crypts as a border-crossing method and (b) including migrant narratives about crypts. No quantitative criteria entered the selection process, which was exploratory and aimed to retrieve the most relevant narratives about crypts. Two of the authors performed the close reading of chosen narratives while the third author reviewed relevant statistics in official reports. Both processes aimed to identify central meanings and themes. Individual texts were analyzed using a thematic coding technique to detect patterns in qualitative data. This approach to coding was inspired by the analytical procedures developed by Strauss and Corbin [21] but does not claim to be a grounded theory approach. Instead, this study uses grounded theory methods as ways of categorizing and identifying patterns in migration narratives concerning crypts. Specific questions stood out as central while others were found to be peripheral or even absent. Most importantly, however, migration narratives constitute spatial reconfiguration of an embodied self: they are complex acts of narration about self, inhabitation, and space, which elucidate the interlacing of subjectivity with mobility [22] and border practices. Studying these narratives and reports foregrounds the material culture of artifacts, such as crypts, devised for traveling to and within Europe.

## 3. Body-Crypt Hybrids Everywhere <sup>1</sup>

The use of crypts in trucks in Greece goes back to the previous century. An article reviewing migration transport in the national newspaper *Vima* on 3 September 2000 informed that “with 1–2 million drachmas, the owner of a lorry-type truck could have special crypts built under the floor of the tractor, at the chassis, under the refrigerating motor, near the fuel reservoirs.” The crypts could be “made and painted so as to deceive the policemen, to open only from the outside so that the illegal (*sic*) migrants cannot exit, and they use the refrigerating motor for ventilation—which,

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<sup>1</sup> For a sample of pictures of representative crypts, see Appendix.

however, brings into the crypt exhaust gases and road dust.” According to the same article, the modifications and adjustments that created crypts could be undertaken illegally at repair shops spread around Attica. Only a month earlier, the police had raided one such illegal repair shop in the Athens neighborhood of Tavros, confiscating three trucks that have been transformed into “slave-trade vehicles”. Moreover, “20 illegal migrants were found in a corner of the same shop, each of whom had paid 1000 to 1500 dollars, depending on the destination country where they were to be unloaded” [23].

Stories about car repair shops used to create crypts are common [24], just like stories about deaths attributed to the use of crypts. Among the many tragic stories is the narrative of two Afghani men who died and an additional migrant who fell into a coma onboard a superfast ferry from Greece to Italy in June of 2012. They were among 18 migrants who had been placed in an unbearably hot crypt with inadequate oxygen, which was configured by adding a second floor in the back of a truck [25]. Some surprising stories, such as one that included police involvement in smuggling using crypts, also make it into the national press [26]. So, too, do stories about near death. A 2008 crypt used to carry 53 migrants over the course of two rides attracted the attention of the national press because tragedy was avoided at the last minute. The description in an article in the September 24th issue of *Ethnos* is revealing:

29 refugees in a crypt without oxygen. They were found in between sacks of coal, wearing face masks because the surrounding atmosphere was suffocating. Three of them were transferred to the hospital in a state of semi-consciousness . . . The eventual destination was the port of Ancona, Italy, through the port of Patras. One Greek and five Iraqis were arrested as systematic smugglers. The 53 illegal migrants were mostly Iraqis, with some Palestinians, Pakistanis, and citizens of Bangladesh among them. The truck was stopped at the Elefsis tolls (near Attica) after the police received special information and moved to follow it. In the back, next to and under the coal sacks, there was a special crypt with an iron fence, like a big cage, which is where the smugglers were placing the illegal migrants. There were two fans that worked with car batteries and home-made air exhaust tubes, which were channeled over the coal sacks, so that the migrants would avoid suffocation. They were provided with masks because one could not breathe in there. Very little oxygen, however, made it into the crypt. The police doubted that they could all have made it to their destination since three of them had to be carried out to the Elefsina hospital in a state of semi-consciousness [27].

A crypt in the north of the country, which was simply a space formed by arranging a cargo of wood in a special manner [28] and a metallic interior crypt in the south (at Corinth), from November and October 2011 [29], are indicative of the geographic spread and the variety of the crypts. A May 2012 article by Stelios Bradelis in daily newspaper *Nea* offers an updated review of crypts. “Hidden inside car engines and even instrument and luggage spaces of buses, migrants search for the opportunity to make it to a western European country through Greece,” Bradelis begins. The sophistication of some of the crypt-related technologies upon which they rely is demonstrated by the example of a two-bus combination crypt arrangement, involving two tourist buses that carried 11 migrants from Georgia to Western Europe, through Greece. Inside the first bus, a crypt had been built right above the luggage space. The migrants were found there packed face down, one atop the other. Two of the passengers were children. The crypt was operating by remote control, just like the second crypt in the other bus, which was placed behind the refrigerator. The plan was to move migrants from the first to the second crypt [30].

The *Nea* article concludes with a quote from a port police officer, who states that the “greatest shock is when we find trucks where several migrants travel with one or more dead migrants in the crypt for days.” This was the case with a truck traveling from Crete to Piraeus [30]. An officer with the police migration department reported that they once needed to tear apart the instrument table of a car to find an Afghan who had paid 1000 US dollars to a smuggler to transfer him to Italy. The same officer reported that, on another occasion, they have found two migrants who had been horribly compressed

in order to fit in the space designed for a vehicle's spare wheel. The Nea article added a third example of a crypt, this time constructed through modification of a truck's oil tank, which was found at the Igoumenitsa port. It was filled with the folded bodies of three migrants [30]. For dozens of migrants, the trip from the Greek port of Patras to the Italian port of Bari or from the Greek port of Igoumenitsa to the Italian port of Brindisi has turned out to be "fatal". For most of the migrants, "the journey would end at a detention camp". A high-ranking Greek police officer is quoted as saying that what the police had to face on a daily basis was "beyond any imagination": "Folded humans, trying to fit in a suitcase, migrants traveling for days in the space of the spare wheel, in the empty space left by the car engine parts, inside car seats" [30].

Crypts could be detected when information was provided to the police upon arresting a member of a smuggler network. They could also be detected by the use of high tech devices. On the other side of the Ionian Sea, Italian policemen, equipped with thermal detection imaging camera-scanners, frequently arrested those who managed to escape from the Greek authorities. The Italian authorities confiscated tens of vehicles, reported Bradelis: "vehicles with crypts that open with telecontrol, tiny crypts where the migrants were folded to fit." He also reported that when the thermal camera indication recently went red at the Italian port of Bari, the police discovered a 22-year old Afghan who was hiding for more than 20 hours under the engine hood of car driven by two Bulgarian citizens [30].

Within Greece, crypt detection could also involve the use of thermal scanners and related devices. For example, authorities' use of an X-ray device led to the detection of a crypt containing migrants and outfitted with an exhaust, which was configured in late July 2010 in a truck carrying crates of watermelons. To the naked eye, the truck was merely transferring watermelons to Hungary, but when the electronic eyes of the scanning device were pointed at it at a border control in Bulgaria, an additional cargo was revealed. A custom-made crypt, nestled between Greek watermelons and Swedish car engine parts, contained 73 humans from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka: 69 men and two women, including two children below the age of ten. This journey exemplifies the transnational nature of disabled mobility [31,32].

The previous story involved a crypt in a vehicle, which was trying to exit Greece, running on a Nordic engine. We can also mention the narrative of Nordic men and a migrant crypt in a vehicle that had just entered Greece. This story was reported in the Thracian newspaper *Xronos*. "Acting upon information passed on to them", we read in *Xronos*, police officers at the Evros border point of Kipoi checked a tourist bus from Georgia, driven by a 28-year-old who was not Greek. "Using a special device for detecting human presence, Frontex officers from Finland discovered five illegal migrants, three women and two men, in a specially devised crypt" [33]. A Frontex "Rabbits" unit could count on quite a lot of high technology: a helicopter from Romania, nine thermal cameras installed in vans, four buses, five minibuses, and 19 patrolling jeeps, placed in the service of 175 men from Austria, Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Yet the image of a Frontex officer manually inspecting the space beneath a truck for possible hidden crypts suggests that much more than high technology was needed [34]. Two local articles from Igoumenitsa in January and February 2011 included photos of, in one case, one of four Kurdish migrants exiting a fuel reservoir that had been transformed into a crypt with some breathing holes and, in the other case, a crypt in between a cargo of wood [35].

Three suggestive cases of crypts in trucks headed from the Greek port of Igoumenitsa to the Italian port of Bari were reported in an article in May 2010. On 7 May, half an hour before midnight, a Greek from the Republic of Georgia, who was resident in the Greek city of Salonica, was arrested hiding four migrants under his truck. On 8 May a Greek from the city of Patras, who was also resident in Salonica, was arrested at 06:05 in the morning for having placed 19 migrants in a crypt formed by the space between large, concave stones. Dangerous as these two crypts were, they were overshadowed by the case of a crypt devised beneath a load of cottonseed. The driver in this case, arrested at seven in the evening on 11 May was an Armenian who was also resident in Salonica. The photos showing the nine migrants found in this crypt circulated widely and were repeatedly used in subsequent years in the context of reporting new stories about crypts [36].

Death or serious injury could also result from confrontations between vehicles containing migrants and national or transnational authorities and organizations. A “tragic accident” following a chase, involving a car containing six immigrants and the Greek police, took place in the Greek-Turkish border county of Evros. According to the story reported in the news, the chased car hit a Frontex vehicle that blocked its way and consequently lost control and caught fire. The driver, possibly the smuggler, was killed in the fire. Two migrants died and four were seriously injured. Of the injured survivors, two were coming to Europe from China and two from Iran [37]. No tightening of control could stop migrants from getting onto trucks loaded with watermelons, oranges, or other cargos. When the driver was not involved in planning the smuggling, the risk of injury or even death was greater. A brief review article in a local Patras media source found that migrants “are risking their lives to make it to Italy by placing themselves anywhere, from the gas tank to the engine.” At the new port of Patras, a truck had actually smashed and killed a migrant who had jumped atop it without its driver’s knowledge [38].

In many cases, the migrants do indeed jump on trucks without the drivers’ knowledge. “Truck drivers at Patras are constantly fighting against the possibility of losing their trucks and getting arrested for smuggling immigrants who are hiding in their trucks without their knowledge,” *neotera.gr* reports in July 2013. “So,” this news website continues, “when they find migrants, they are prompted to call the authorities.” This is what a truck driver carrying watermelons had done the previous evening upon discovering a migrant hidden in the cargo area of his vehicle. The migrant was arrested by the Patras Central Port Authority [39]. “The policemen who checked the truck were left with their mouths wide with surprise,” writes *newsit.gr*, quoting *Thrakitoday.gr*, in reporting the story of an Iranian truck driver who had hidden four migrants in a crypt placed at the axes of the truck wheels. The truck was stopped in Thrace by the Greek police, 20 km inside Greek territory. The migrants were handed over to Greek border authorities and the driver taken to jail [40]. This story was treated as an “ordinary piece of news, but it deserved to make it to the front page of the newspapers,” according to *left.gr* [41].

#### 4. Migrant Bodies in Crypts: A Dis/Abling Practice

In an auto-ethnographic study of his own experience as a traveling migrant, Shahram Khosravi has forcefully argued that the border is inseparable from the traveling migrant body, which carries with it the border, which is the border [42]. Through her study of the travels of a female Albanian migrant, who found herself traveling back and forth between Greece and Albania, Dina Vaiou has further argued that the traveling migrant body-border is engendered [43]. We have extended their arguments by showing that the mobile border is not simply defined by the engendered traveling migrant body but, more precisely, by the way in which this body connects to the technology of traveling, in this case the container technology of crypts embedded in vehicles. Camille Schmoll has drawn attention to a female migrant who kept repeating “I am fingerprint”, as if there were no distinction between the high finger-printing technology imposed on her body and her identification as a migrant [44] (p. 179). Drawing upon the work of both Khosravi-Vaiou and Schmoll, we have here introduced a case that shows how the technology imposed upon the migrant body can be mobile without needing to be high technology (such as the one based on fingerprinting devices and the infrastructures formed by their interconnections). A low container technology can also form a unit with the traveling migrant body and the border borne along by body and crypt.

We adopted an analytical symmetry between humans and non-humans, in this case between bodies and crypts [45]. By suggesting an infected, ambivalent, and hybrid approach to the human subject, the body-crypt traveling border challenges the essentialist dichotomies between technology and biology, disability, and impairment. As Margrit Shildrick has shown, dis/ability—like (im)mobility—comes into being when anomalous subjectivities “are irreducibly caught up in a web of constitutive connections that disturb the very idea of the human being” [6]. Disability refers to an effect or performing agency that emerges when irregular bodies interact with disabling material practices [45]. A case in point is provided by borders as material processes or practices, as bordering practices [7–9]. These practices signify and over-determine the work of bordering and its symbolic and

material/semiotic implications. In this article, we are interested in how bordering practices perform disabling practices, thereby spontaneously affecting (non)citizenship.

Bordering practices are not just territorial lines or technological artifacts. Border practices constitute boundaries of protected identities and perform an institutionalized form of racism, a filter for “undesirable” bodies [9]. Ruben Andersson [46] explains that border guards and migrants are bound together in what has been described as the “border game” or “border spectacle”. Border practices have been sites of contestations and struggles over “who belongs and who doesn’t,” who is and is not allowed to move freely in transnational or national spaces. Embedded as they are in the bordering process, policing and security practices produce the irregularity and illegitimacy of the migrating subject, performing the illegality of the migrant and constituting the migrant as a “dangerous citizen” [47,48]. At the same time, the ontology of bordering practices simultaneously implies processes of dissidence and resistance [49]. Border dissidence and resistance to bordering practices refer to dynamic and complex interactions between migrants and non-human others, containing spaces-artifacts in the border zone, the no man’s land.

Ground-breaking studies of the material dimensions of border crossing have, thus far, focused on artifacts and practices related to the high tech of the state (national and transnational), from biotechnological and biomedical screening to electronic control and surveillance, from thermal electronic cameras/scanners and drones to biotechnology-based screening [50,51]. By drawing attention to crypts, we point to the need to open up research to the low technological artifacts that come to challenge thermal scanners and the like through their use for border crossing by migrants. Transport-related artifacts are usually associated with enabling mobility. We are, here, inspired by the study of the limits and failures of transport artifacts due to accidental or endemic causes, which has substantially enriched the study of transport while at the same time highlighting the disabling limits to mobility and immobility [52,53].

Our epistemological position aims to challenge the normative pitch of the dominant discourse and the stereotype of the ableist normative autonomous citizen. Following Nicholas De Genova, we aspire to explore a material politics of migration that transcends the normative limits of the independent Western subject altogether and subverts the fetishized fixities of the naturalized human body outright. Or as De Genova puts it, we “want to ask a question about the politics of human mobility, generally, that foregrounds a practice of freedom that can never be recuperated to the constituted status (or even the dynamic practices) of citizenship, which emphasizes freedom as an exercise that is never reducible to something so objectified and delimited as ‘rights’, and which likewise refuses to attach itself to any positive, thing-like (naturalized) ‘identity’ as such” [54]. The migrant subject is constituted by a network of heterogeneous interactions that enable or disable the very idea of being citizen, of being human.

## 5. Conclusions

In this article, we have looked into migration narratives concerning crypts, an extreme class of the artifacts that form the material culture of clandestine migration. They represent the most ephemeral and concealed aspect of this material culture, frequently nothing more than a transitional space within a load of cargo. Their use forces migrants to adjust physically and psychologically to a leftover space and/or to dark, smelly, and wet conditions, frequently with inadequate oxygen, thereby materially and culturally exemplifying the dis/abling practice of the material culture of migration. Crypts help us to think about how border-crossing artifacts are involved in co-shaping the sociotechnical agency (or the deprivation of agency) that produces dis/abled and displaced subjectivities.

Unlike, for instance, rubber boats, crypts defy modeling: they cannot be presented without the disabled bodies they contain. Bodies contained in crypts perform illegality for the migrant subject. This illegality materializes into a plastic body, folded to fit vehicular crypts. We are witnessing a hybrid that produces dis/ability. Depending on the crypt’s success, it produces the invisibility of a hybrid assemblage of human flesh with the material form of the crypt itself. Within the assemblage, the body

becomes malleable matter, adaptable to whatever conditions the crypt affords. In this sense, crypts are active. This supports Sofia's [15] argument against the perception of container technologies as passive. The new form of corporeality created by adjustment to them depends on, for example, the porosity between a watermelon cargo, which allows migrants to breathe while remaining invisible from thermal cameras.

We speak of bodies that resist oppressive border practices and the regressive amputation of citizenship. Such resistance becomes possible only if the body can be reorganized within the crypt, can survive asphyxiation, and remain invisible. Practices such as mixing with watermelons or hiding in the gas tank subvert corporeal organization by rearranging and disabling the old body, thereby resisting the modern understanding of the human organism. Following Shildrick [6], when looking at how bordering processes disable the migrant subject, "we are belatedly realizing that the body, far from being a fairly standardized and self-contained entity, is highly plastic and rich in the possibilities of intercorporeality" (p. 12). That being said, whatever the sociomaterial context of the human subject, it is never independent from a web of performative and heterogeneous interactions that constitute the very idea of being citizen, human, mobile, abled.

Thus far, migration studies—even the most critical studies—have emphasized technologies used by those who have sought to block access to Europe. We have here introduced migrant crypts in order to point to the need to match this emphasis with symmetrical attention to the artifacts of those who seek to enter Europe. While authorities imposing and defining borders seek to create and enforce boundaries of various kinds, these borders are also made to be contested and crossed. The crossing of borders often involves a complex set of ritual practices, symbolic gestures, and movements [55]. In the cases discussed here, practices of contesting and crossing borders entail the pursuit of mobility through the use of alternative configurations of the standard material order, namely through the devising of idiosyncratic material spaces within vehicles run by standard engines.

As we see it, Europe, as shaped through the sociotechnical clash that constitutes its borders, has been the outcome of a struggle involving both the technologies of maintaining the fortress Europe and the technologies of breaching this fortress. This does not mean that we simply wish to add the low technologies of those who try to make it to Europe to the high technologies of those who try to keep them outside, and to the bodies of the human actors involved. We argue that we cannot properly understand the migrant subject without understanding the material culture of border practices in action. This means studying technology not only in connection with the rhetoric of those who introduce it but also in light of how it is materialized in human bodies through clandestine border-crossing practices and material configurations (artifacts). To be sure, the demarcation between superior and inferior technology, just like that between the inside and the outside of Europe (as well as between ability and disability, body and materiality, citizenship and invisibility), is not presupposed at the start of our history. It is, instead, the material-semiotic effect of this history.

We have here sought to approach what the introduction defined as the "border spectacle" in terms of hybrids, beyond self/other, or intercorporeality [5]. There is a risk here of reducing the border spectacle to a-subjective, apolitical interactions between heterogeneous actors and creating alignments between them. This is not our aim. There are no innocent forms of bordering practices. Instead, bordering is related to overarching capitalist and statist constructs for conserving privileges [9]. Our theorization of bordering practices as performances of dis/ablement renders the actors participating in the hybrid politically productive [56]. We conceptualize how complex hybrids of bordering practices and migrant subjects materially, politically, and socially simultaneously enact (im)mobility, dis/ablement, and (non-)citizenship.

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**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Appendix

A sample of crypt representations in the press:

1. In a Crypt without Oxygen 29 refugees. Available online: <http://www.ethnos.gr/article.asp?catid=22768&subid=2&pubid=1630611> (accessed on 31 March 2016). (In Greek)
2. Arrest of Smugglers' Network in Igoumenitsa. Available online: [http://troktiko.blogspot.gr/2010/05/blog-post\\_8531.html](http://troktiko.blogspot.gr/2010/05/blog-post_8531.html) (accessed on 31 March 2016). (In Greek)
3. Customs Officers found 73 Illegal Immigrants in a Truck Carrying Boxes of Watermelons. Available online: [http://www.grreporter.info/gr/Teloneiakoi\\_upalleloi\\_entopisan\\_73\\_lathrometanastes\\_se\\_phortego\\_pou\\_metephere\\_khartokibotia\\_me\\_karpouzia/2031](http://www.grreporter.info/gr/Teloneiakoi_upalleloi_entopisan_73_lathrometanastes_se_phortego_pou_metephere_khartokibotia_me_karpouzia/2031) (accessed on 31 March 2016). (In Greek)
4. A Dead-end Port. Available online: <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=268700> (accessed on 31 March 2016). (In Greek)
5. He Hided Foreigners in His Truck. Available online: [http://korinthianews.blogspot.gr/2011/10/blog-post\\_1884.html](http://korinthianews.blogspot.gr/2011/10/blog-post_1884.html) (accessed on 31 March 2016). (In Greek)
6. He Hided 26 Clandestine Migrants in an Especially Configured Crypt in a Private Truck Transporting Timber. Available online: <http://adesmeuti-thrakis.blogspot.gr/2011/09/26.html> (accessed on 31 March 2016). (In Greek)
7. A 53 Year Old Man Was Arrested in Igoumenitsa for Smuggling Clandestine Migrants. Available online: <http://sygxronos.blogspot.gr/2012/09/53.html> (accessed on 31 March 2016). (In Greek)
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